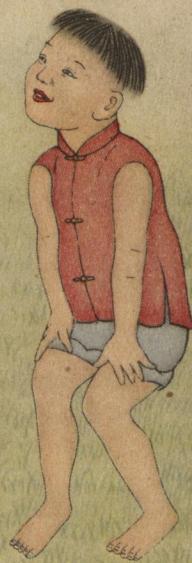


Dabbits



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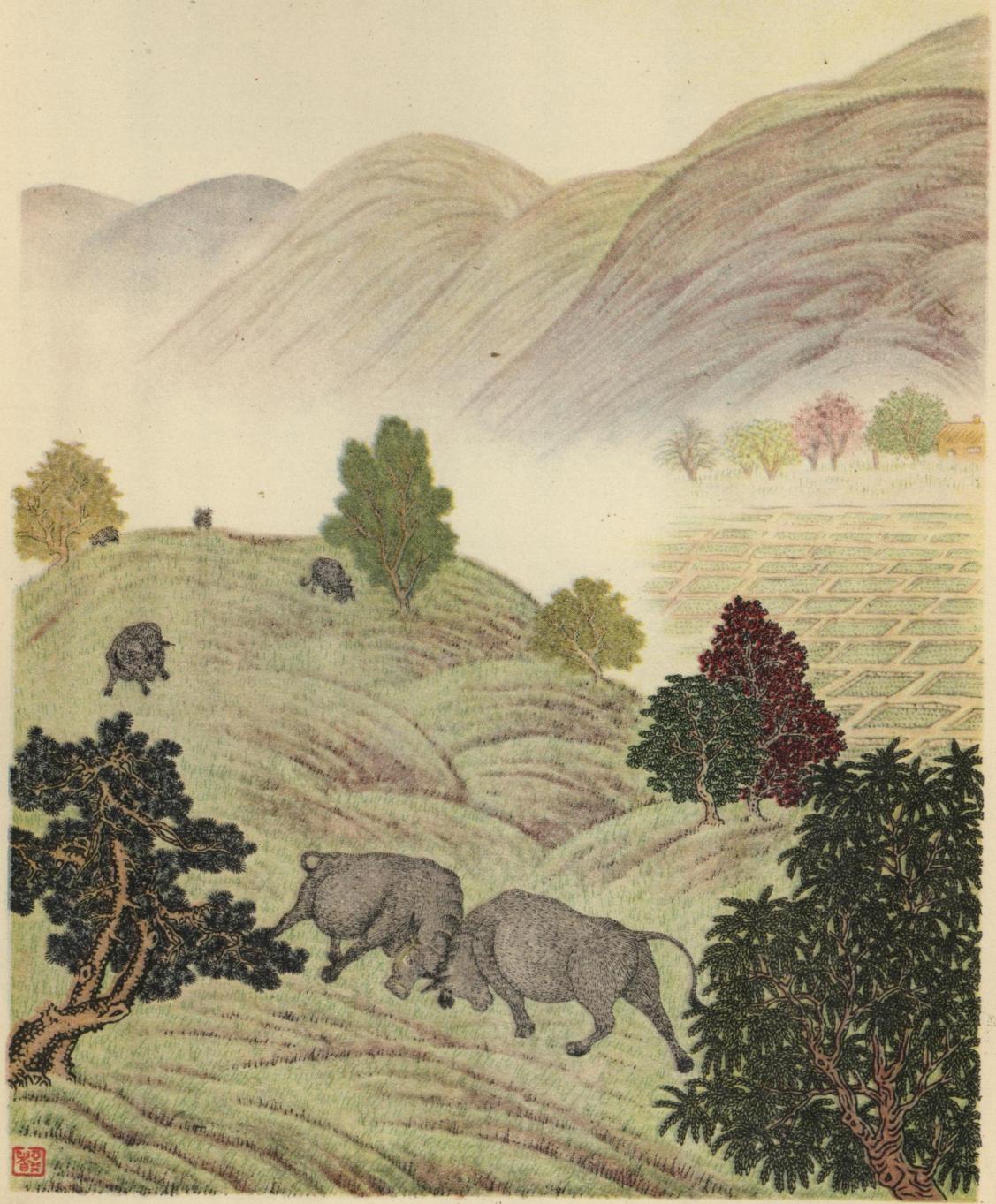
蒋彝



by
Chiang Yee

Fil Jens Høyrup
med dansk-norsk-kinesisk
titel:

Billingstad 1746,
Liv og Død Høst.



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D A B B I T S E

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HO LIN was three years old. His mother had just died. His father had been very poor as a young man; he had had to work hard for a long time to save enough money to buy a piece of land of his own. On the strength of this he got married and set up a home. People who knew him had nicknamed him "Obstinate Ho," because he worked with such obstinate persistence. He very seldom talked, for he never had a minute to spare from work. After his marriage he and his wife laboured away at their little plot of land, producing enough food to feed themselves and a little surplus which they sold in order to have the money to buy such things as salt, fat and cloth, which they could not produce themselves. They were happy enough, but both longed for a son to make their happiness complete. And at last, when the old man was sixty years of age, a son was born to them. They called him Ho Lin. Ho was the family name and Lin means a kind of "jade." Ho Lin's mother was devoted to this small son, whom she and her husband had wanted for so long. But, unfortunately, she never thoroughly regained her health after the child's birth; and now, at the age of three, Ho Lin was left without a mother.

Obstinate Ho was overwhelmed by his loss; and even the little boy's smile could hardly cheer him. The fact that now he would have to do all the work in the rice-field himself, and would have no time to look after Ho Lin, worried him. After some thought he decided that, much as he dreaded parting with the boy, he ought to let him go to be looked after by his younger brother's wife.

Obstinate Ho and his younger brother had worked together until the brother, too, had managed to buy a plot of land of his own. But although this land lay only about 15 miles away, on the other side of the Yangtse river, the brothers met seldom—perhaps once a year. Chinese farmers have no busses passing their doors and no bicycles; everywhere they must journey on foot, and usually they are so busy in their fields that a journey of several miles on foot is impossible. Thus, Obstinate Ho had only met his brother's wife twice and knew very little about her. He assumed she would know how to look after a small boy, though she had no



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children of her own. But in fact she was not a good-natured woman and was a tyrannical one, whose husband was so completely under her thumb that he had gained the nickname of "Timid Ho."

Obstinate Ho did not need to send his proposal to Timid Ho, who would be bound to pay him a visit of respect when he heard of the death of his sister-in-law and, sure enough, in a few days' time, Ho Lin's uncle and aunt arrived. Timid Ho had been able to arrange for a neighbour to look after his field during the visit.

When Ho Lin was called to pay his respect to his uncle and aunt, Timid Ho began to speak to the little boy kindly and affectionately, until he noticed the displeased look on his wife's face. Then he broke off abruptly. Ho Lin would have liked to run to his aunt as he had always done to his mother, but her stern unfriendly face forbade him.

After the evening meal, when Ho Lin had been put to bed, Obstinate Ho began to speak of his great worry concerning Ho Lin's upbringing, and asked whether the uncle and aunt would agree to look after the boy in return for so much rice a year. Timid Ho looked doubtfully at his wife, afraid to answer himself. She seemed pleased at the amount of rice offered and nodded to her husband, who then said that they would certainly take the boy with them. This was a great relief to the old man.

That night Timid Ho and his wife occupied the same room as Ho Lin, who had previously always slept in his parents' room. When he awoke in the morning he called his mother as usual; for, being so young, he had not realised that he would not see her any more. Receiving no answer he called more loudly and began to cry. This annoyed the aunt, who got up and went over to him and said, "Stop crying for your mother. She is dead. I'll smack you if you cry again." Ho Lin at once remembered the stern unfriendly face which was not his mother's and cried more loudly still. At once his aunt gave him a heavy smack on the cheek. Such a thing had never happened to Ho Lin before. His mother and father were much too fond of him to hurt him. He was so startled that he stopped crying, but he could not bear to look at his aunt's face bending over him. He never forgot that moment.

Obstinate Ho had gone out early to the field, so did not know anything of this incident. He noticed that the little boy seemed quieter than usual during the remaining three days of the uncle and aunt's visit. But the old man thought this only natural while his son was getting used to two



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new people whom he had not met before. He did not talk much to the boy partly because he was so busy and partly in order that Ho Lin should begin to turn more towards his aunt.

Not until everything was ready for the departure could Obstinate Ho bring himself to tell the boy that he was now going to live with his uncle and aunt. Ho Lin looked completely bewildered, then clutched his father's legs tightly and burst into loud crying. His aunt told him not to be silly and tried to drag him away from Obstinate Ho by force, while Timid Ho stood by, looking helpless. Nothing would induce the little boy to loosen his hold on his father's legs nor to look up at his aunt. Obstinate Ho was deeply moved and could not say a word. He had been dreading the parting with his son, and now when he felt Ho Lin's desperate clutch on his legs and saw his pitiful little tear-stained face he felt that he could not be so cruel as to force the boy to go. At the same time he noticed the unsympathetic look in his sister-in-law's eyes and realised that he knew little about her. What if she illtreated his little son? He could not bear the thought and found himself declaring that he had changed his mind and would look after Ho Lin himself. He apologised to the aunt for causing her unnecessary trouble. She pretended to be annoyed but she was really quite relieved to be rid of the boy, even though that meant the relinquishment of the handsome payment in rice.

II

NEXT morning Obstinate Ho was disturbed by Ho Lin's waking cry of "Mother." It made him feel sad again. He asked the boy if he would rather have gone away with his aunt after all. Ho Lin's eyes opened wide with fear and he said "No, no" in a very small voice. So Obstinate Ho explained to him that there would not be a "mother" any more and that he must try to be a good little boy by himself.

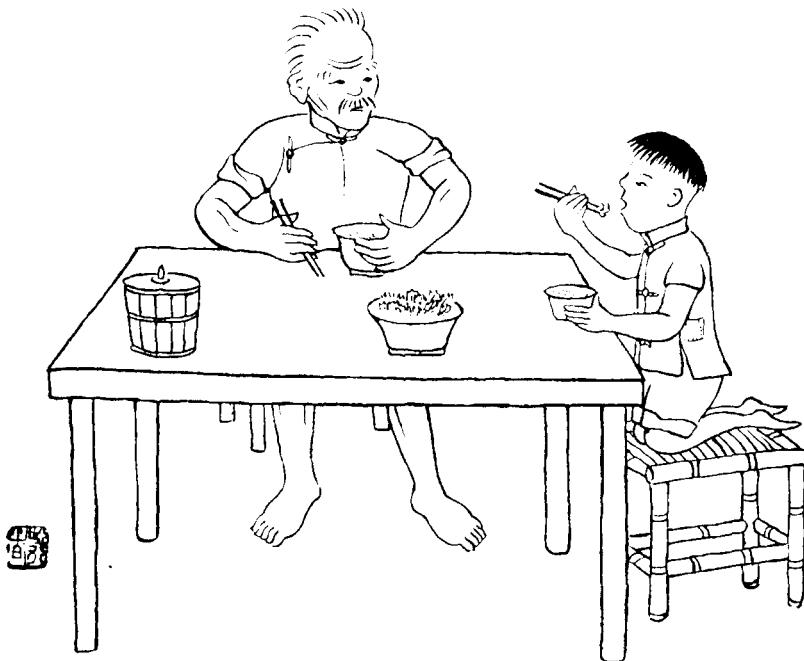
Then Obstinate Ho got up, boiled some rice with a certain amount of water and produced "congee." Father and son ate it, with some preserved salted cabbage, as their breakfast. When they had finished they both set off for the field. Ho Lin was to stay on the path round the field and amuse himself, while his father drove the big buffalo which pulled the plough.

For the first few days Obstinate Ho kept a sharp eye on his young son, until he saw that the boy was of an independent nature and quite able to find amusement for himself. Sometimes Ho Lin would be occupied watching an insect hopping about through the grass and trying to catch it, seldom with success. Sometimes he would run a long way along the high path dividing one rice-field

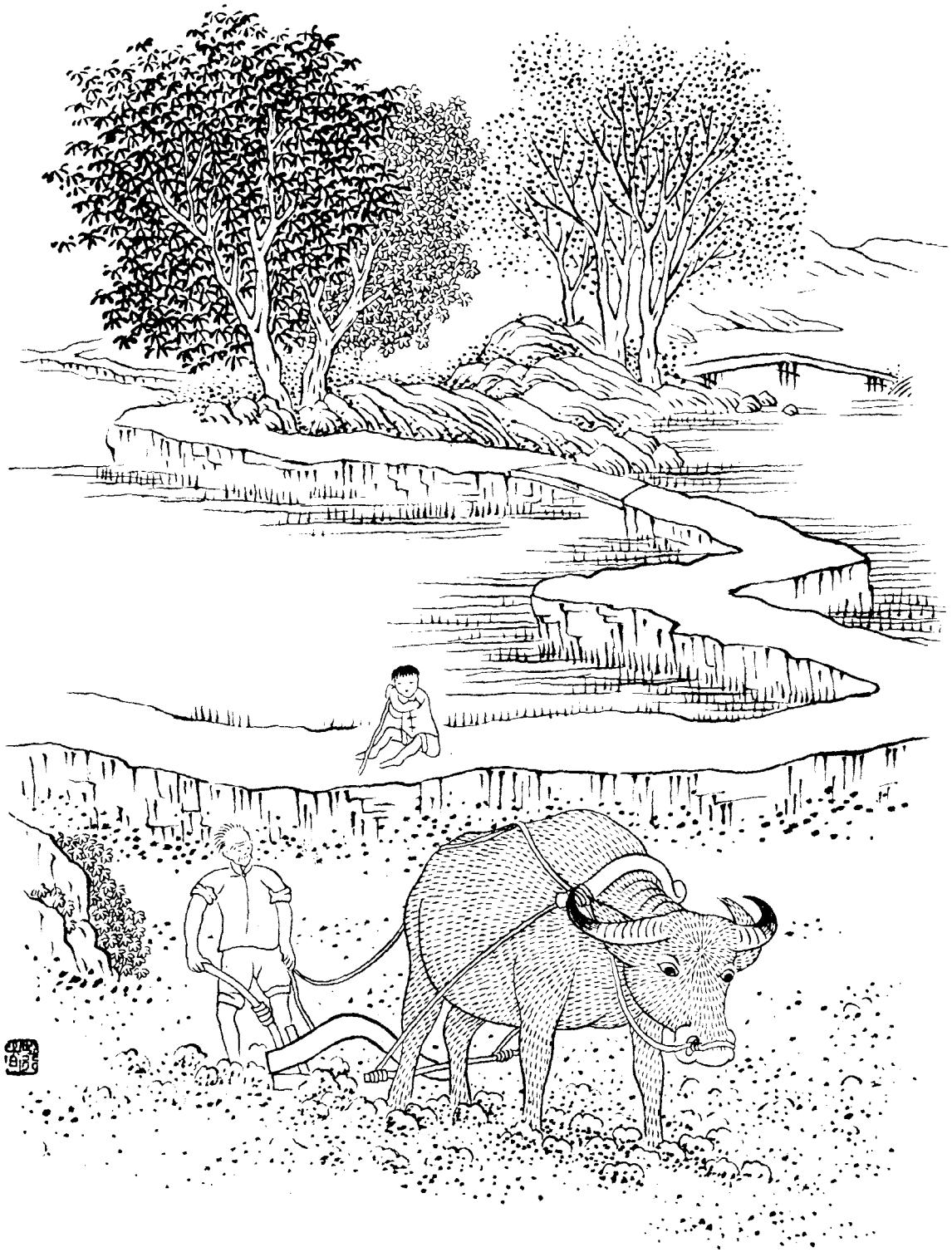
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from another. He had the path all to himself. Now and again he would go down to the stream and paddle. He could usually find a bit of broken branch with which to whip the surface of the water.

What Ho Lin liked best, however, was to watch his father urging along the big water-buffalo. In this part of China the peasants more often use water-buffaloes than oxen to plough their fields ; horses they do not use at all. This is because the soil in the richly fertile valley of the Yangtse river is generally wet



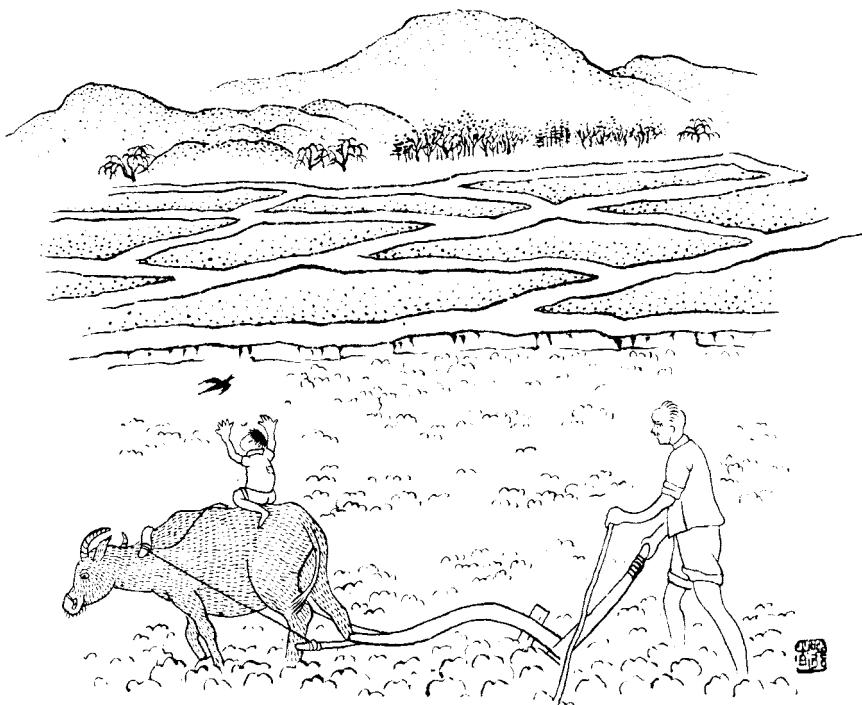
and muddy and the buffalo can get along in it better than the ox or the horse. Chinese farmers have been using the water-buffalo as a domestic animal for more than a thousand years, and as a result it has entirely lost its wild nature and is quite different from the African buffalo. To the Chinese farmer, his water-buffalo is a treasure. Without it he cannot get his rice-field work done. This animal has a body as big as that of a young elephant. Its colour is much the same as an elephant's but darker, the hide being covered with short furry hairs. Its legs are relatively short like a cow's, and its head also resembles a cow's except that it is longer, with more of a nose. Two great horns curve like two bows from just above its ears. The middle of its back is wide and flat, and



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farmers usually ride their water-buffaloes home when the day's work is done. They walk very slowly and steadily, again like an elephant.

Sometimes for a treat Obstinate Ho would lift the boy up on the buffalo's back and let him sit there while the animal pulled the plough. A water-buffalo is very strong, it can carry or draw immense loads, so Ho Lin's little weight made no difference. Ho Lin loved these rides. When he was on the buffalo's back he felt so high up that the trees were no longer tall and the top of the hill behind



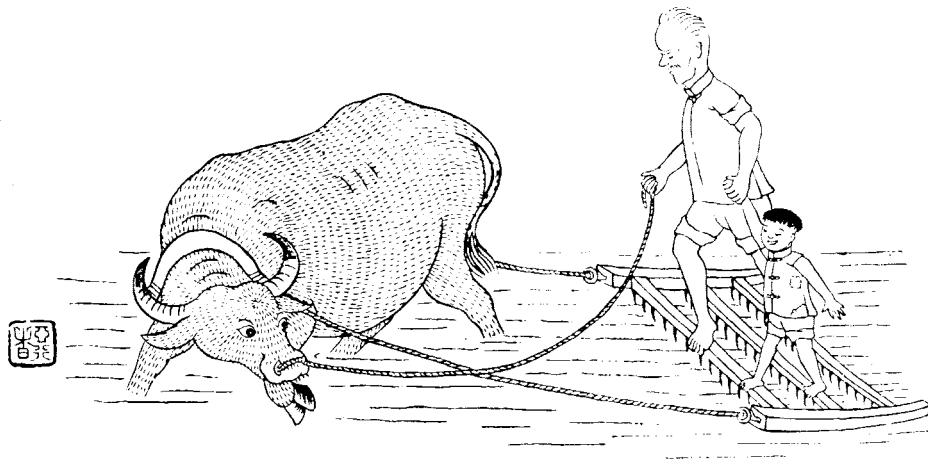
his home looked quite close. Everything looked different. He could see the little stream, in which he sometimes paddled, coming down the hillside. Sometimes birds flew quite close to his head and he would stretch up his hands to catch them. Of course he never did catch them, and indeed he did not dare to try very hard in case he fell off the buffalo's back.

Sometimes the rhythmical up and down movement of the beast under him gave such pleasure that he ceased to think about anything else at all. One very hot summer morning he felt like this and quite failed to realise that he was

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becoming drowsier and drowsier, until finally he slipped right off the buffalo's back into the muddy field. This irritated Obstinate Ho, who had to change the boy's clothes when they got home ; and thereafter Ho Lin was not allowed to sit long on the buffalo's back on hot days.

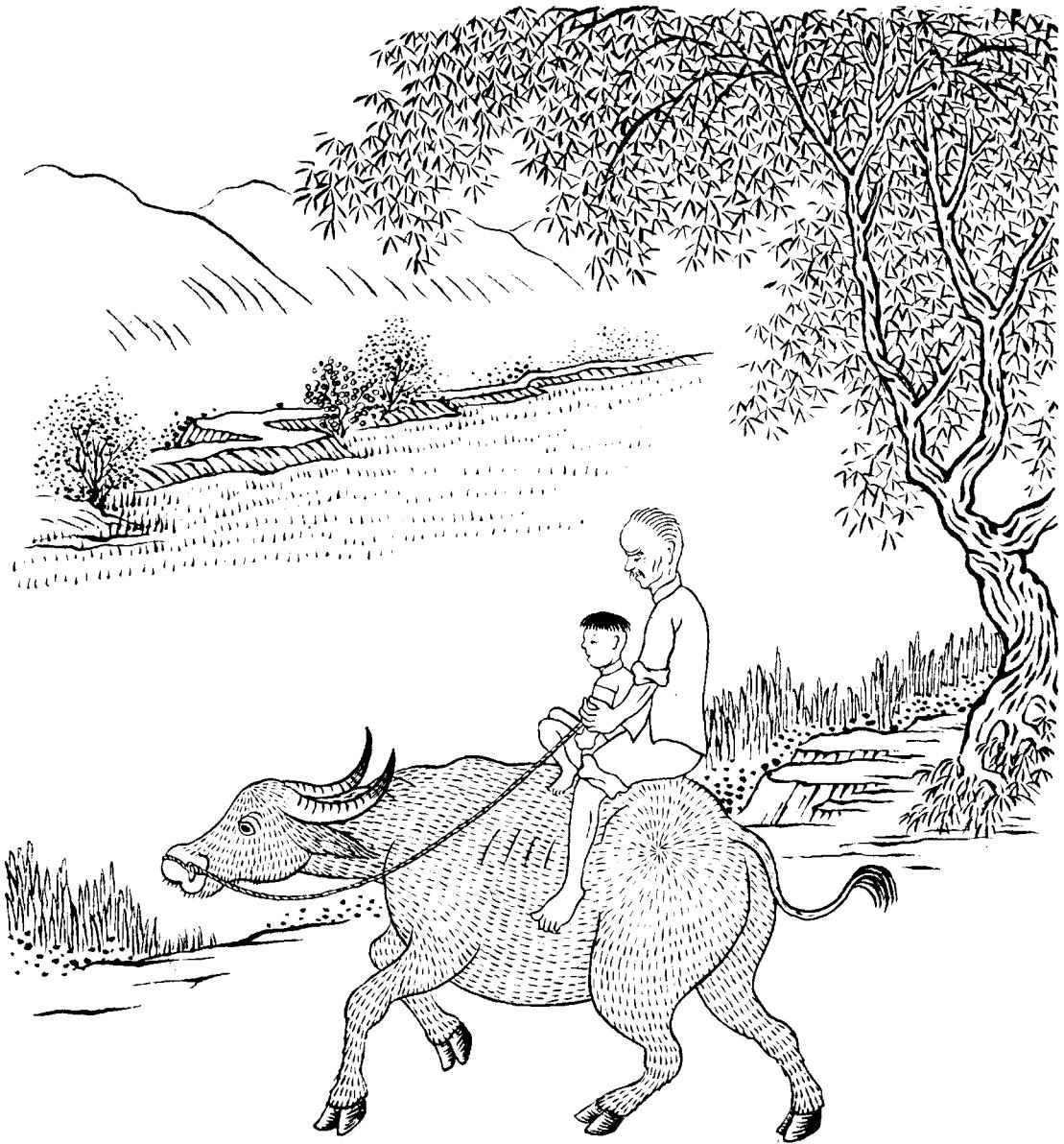
During the harrowing of the field before the rice seed was sown, Obstinate Ho could give his small son another treat. After the ploughing the buffalo had to draw a big wooden harrow over the surface of the field. There had to be a certain weight on the harrow in order that it should do its work of levelling thoroughly. Obstinate Ho therefore always stood on the harrow himself, and sometimes he allowed Ho Lin to stand beside him. Ho Lin felt just as thrilled as any little boy riding on a sledge or flying along on a scooter. He thought it



was very good of his father to let him have such fun and he wished the field needed harrowing oftener.

Ho Lin was now able to collect the lighter tools for his father before they set off for the field in the morning and when they were preparing to return in the evening. Sometimes both father and son rode on the buffalo's back to and from the field ; sometimes Ho Lin rode alone while his father led the animal. On the way home if Obstinate Ho was pleased with his day's work he would teach Ho Lin to sing some of the simple hill songs which all the country people know.

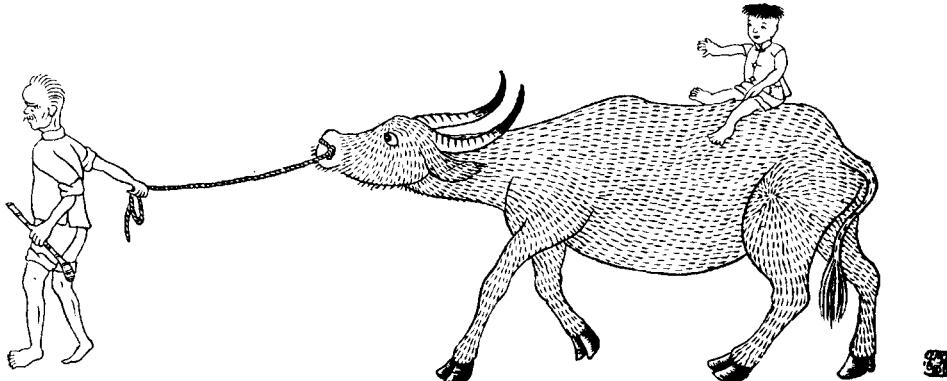
Now that Obstinate Ho saw what a good and obedient little boy Ho Lin was, he decided to leave him at home on days of heavy rain, for he did not like the boy to get wet. He himself *had* to go on working in the rain, but he did not



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mind doing so, for he knew that without the rain he could not get good rice crops. He used to tell Ho Lin exactly what to do at home, and the boy carried out his instructions as well as he could. He would let the hens out of their cage and would give the pigs the food his father had prepared the evening before.

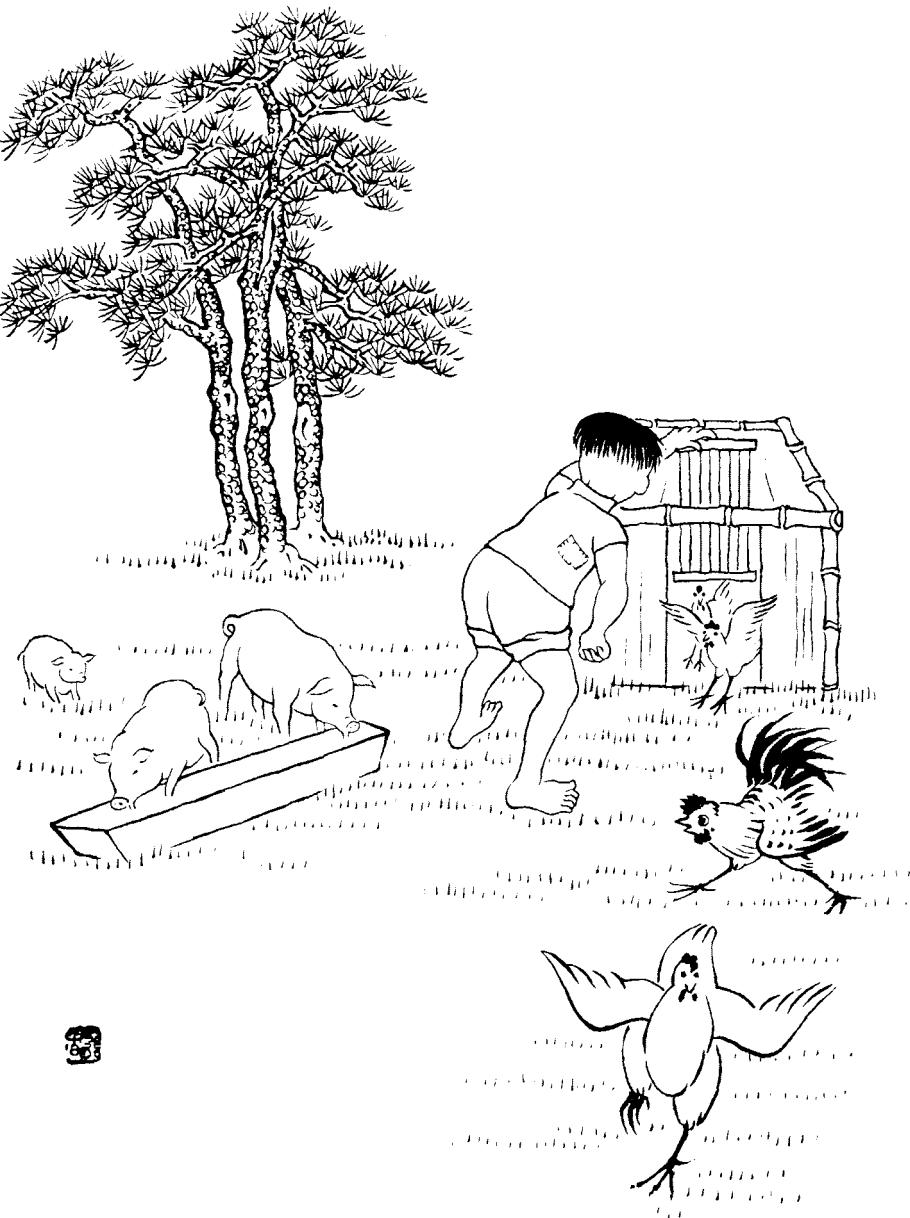
Ho Lin's home was very small. It consisted of two little bedrooms with a hall in the middle and a tiny kitchen at the back. This is the common arrangement for a small farm house in China. Such houses are very simply constructed and most farmers build their own. Obstinate Ho had built this one with the help of two men from the nearest village. There was no other house in sight of it. It stood at the bottom of a fairly high hill and was surrounded by tall old pine trees. When Obstinate Ho had bought his plot of land he had thought



to himself that the pine trees would give shelter to his house from wind and rain—and so they did.

To the left of the house was the water-buffalo's stable. It consisted of a circular wall of earthen brick four or five feet high, with a gap just large enough for the buffalo to go in and out. Across the top were laid a number of strong logs with hay built on them in the shape of a round English haystack. Inside this stable there was plenty of room for the buffalo to walk about. In winter when there is snow on the ground or in any very stormy weather the water-buffalo is not taken out to graze; instead it raises its head inside its stable and eats some of the roof—a highly practical arrangement. It soon became one of Ho Lin's regular jobs to see that there was enough hay on the floor of the stable to make a comfortable bed for the animal, as well as to notice if she was getting enough to eat from the roof.

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Obstinate Ho looked forward to the day when the boy would be able to take the buffalo out for an airing in the early morning or when it was not needed for field work. At present Obstinate Ho had to do so himself, but he always took Ho Lin with him in order to make the boy familiar with the



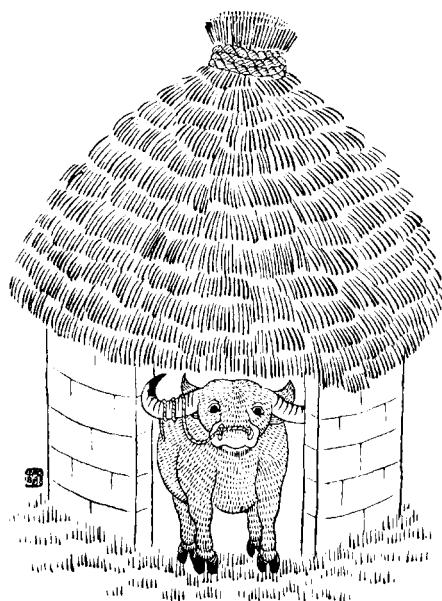
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job. It was not difficult. When the buffalo was ridden to the open ground, generally on the slope of a hill, she could be left loose to graze at large. At

nightfall she had to be ridden home again. Sometimes she was taken to a stream or shallow pool to enjoy lying in the water. All water-buffaloes love wallowing in water. Ho Lin soon learnt all this and knew exactly where to take the animal, but Obstinate Ho considered him still too young to manage her alone, though he was growing fast. Ho Lin was now a fine boy of five.

One warm evening when they were riding home together Obstinate Ho told Ho Lin that he would soon have a young companion to play with. The news did not mean much to the boy, who had met no one except his father, his uncle and his aunt. He would have met some other boys had his father taken the buffalo to the common grazing ground, where there were many other buffaloes with their herdboys. As it

was, he had not much idea what a playmate was, and felt only an excited interest.



III

SOON after this, one early morning in late spring, Obstinate Ho went off to the field by himself without disturbing Ho Lin. The late spring in China can be very hot, as hot as summer—and that is much hotter than an English summer. The old man knew that Ho Lin probably had not slept well during the stifling night or he would not now be still in deep slumber. He himself had to go to the field as early as usual, for the late spring is the busiest time of the year for the Chinese farmer. He did not need the water-buffalo for the time being. He did, however, visit the buffalo in her stable before he set off for the field. He knew that something was about to happen in the stable.

When Ho Lin woke and found his father gone, he was not surprised; it had happened several times before for one reason or another. The boy got up and dressed. This did not take long, for in the warm weather he wore neither shirt, socks nor shoes, and in any case his father had not much money

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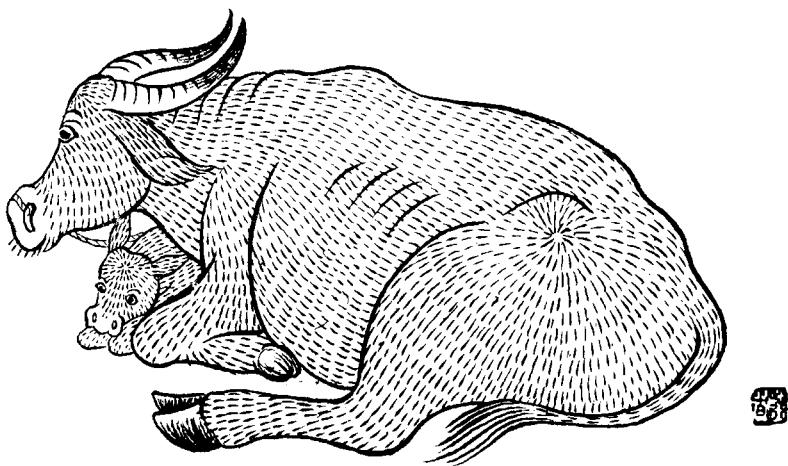


to spend on clothes either for himself or his son. The boy dipped his head into a basin of cold water to wash his eyes, and ate some boiled rice with salted cabbage for his breakfast as usual. Then his morning jobs began.

In the stable to his great surprise he saw some sort of object lying beyond the water-buffalo. He could not make out what it was because the big buffalo's back filled the whole entrance to the stable. So he uttered the usual noise to make the buffalo rise. When she got up the other thing got up too, rather unsteadily. Ho Lin's eyes almost popped out of his head at seeing a baby water-buffalo with two big round eyes and four long legs. He at once wanted to throw his arms round it and stroke it,

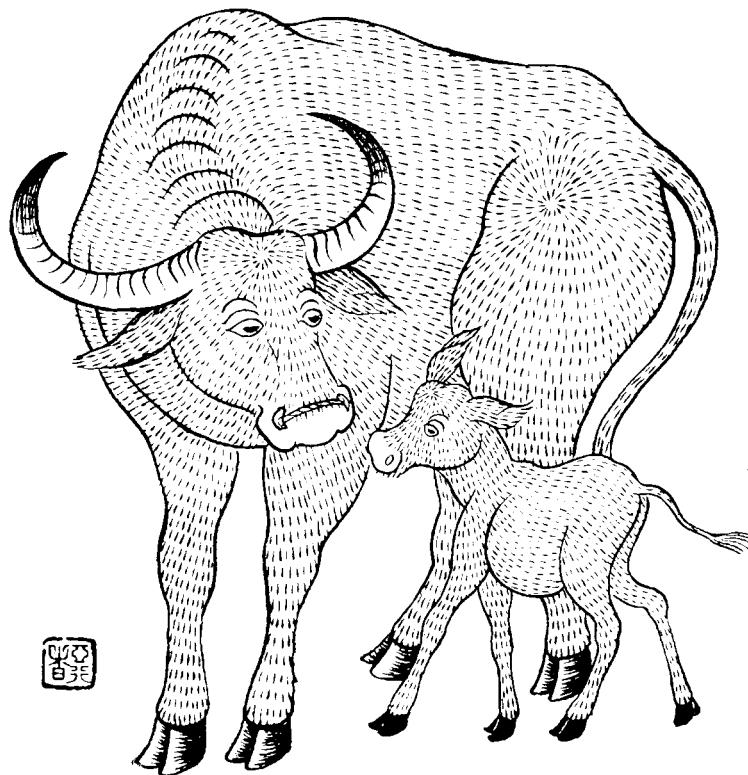
but the little creature was shy and kept dodging round its mother each time Ho Lin came too near. The mother water-buffalo did not seem to mind this game.

Presently Ho Lin decided that he should lead the big buffalo out to graze as usual. Of course the calf followed. Ho Lin wound the long rope in loops and slung it round one of the buffalo's two big horns and let her loose to graze near the house. The calf watched with its big startled eyes. It still would not



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let Ho Lin come too near. But he could see it much better now in the open and he thought it was a very odd little creature. Its long legs seemed out of proportion to its small body. When it walked or ran on these four long sticks Ho Lin could not help laughing at the strange movement. At first the calf was frightened at being chased by the boy and at Ho Lin's loud peals of laughter. But by degrees it seemed to realise that this was only play and even

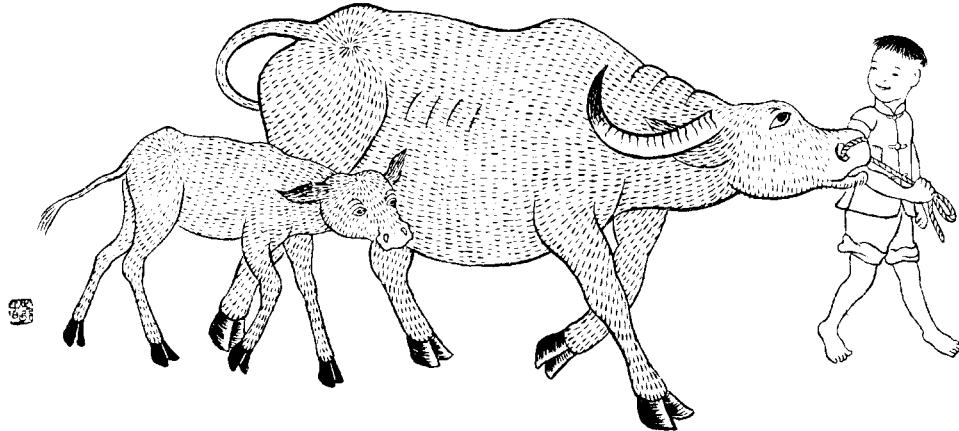


began to tease the boy by pretending to gallop away and then rushing back suddenly.

Eventually they both grew tired, and when Ho Lin sat down on the ground, the calf lay down beside him. Ho Lin took its head on his lap. The big buffalo paid no attention to them at all. Ho Lin looked affectionately at his playmate and began to think of a name for him. "Shall I call you Long Legs or Big Eyes?" murmured the boy. Neither of these names seemed satisfactory, because one of the hens had very long legs and the cock had big eyes.

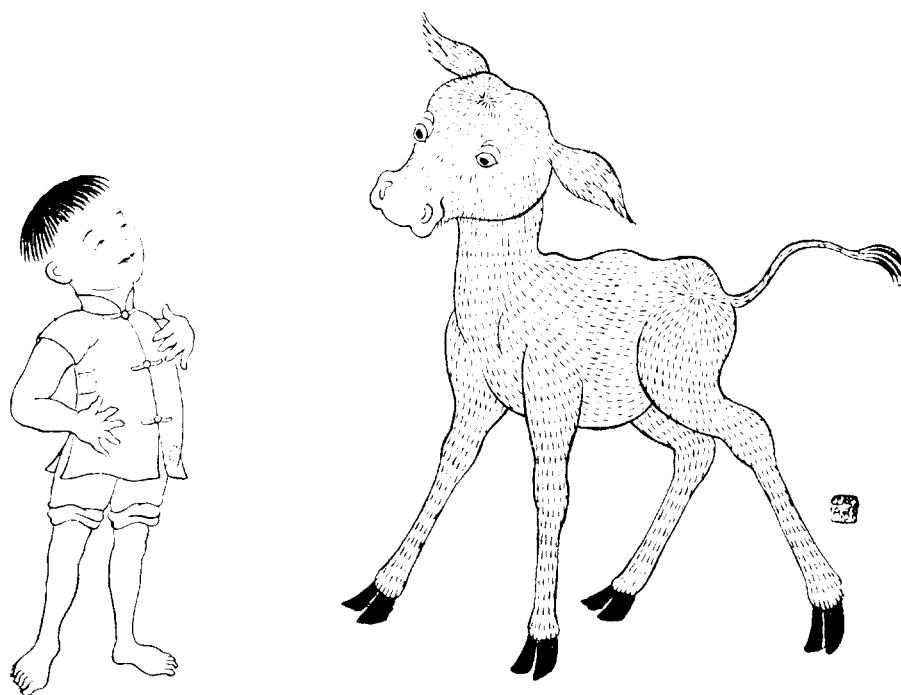


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Still Ho Lin kept looking at the calf—what a big, long nose it had—its nose was really the oddest thing about it. “I shall call you *Da-hi-tse*,” he cried. Da-bi-tse or Dabbitse means “Big Nose.”

As soon as Ho Lin had decided on a name for his friend he wanted to tell



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his father. He had not thought about his father till that moment. He ran off to the field at once with a broad smile on his face. The calf followed him a little way, but returned to its mother.

Ho Lin had not realised that it was long after the time for the usual midday meal. His father always took some cooked rice or rice-cakes and some salted vegetables and pickles to the field with him and Ho Lin went there to share it with him. To-day Obstinate Ho had not waited for his son, for he had guessed that Ho Lin would be taken up with the new arrival. He felt glad that now the little boy would have a companion to play with. When he saw Ho Lin rushing towards him he smiled to himself as he continued to work the water-wheel which brought the water up to his field from the lower stream.

"Dabbitse, Dabbitse," shouted Ho Lin as he came nearer. "Tell me all about it," said Obstinate Ho, laughing. Then Ho Lin told how he had found the baby buffalo in the stable, and how they had played together, and also how he had thought of a name: "Dabbitse." The old man said that this was a most suitable name for the baby buffalo. He then urged Ho Lin to eat up the food he had left for him. Ho Lin was very hungry and ate it without delay. Also he was in a hurry to get back to Dabbitse. Obstinate Ho told him that he must take good care of Dabbitse, who would grow up to be useful and faithful like the old water-buffalo. "Dabbitse will be yours," said Obstinate Ho, "and I think he will be a very good friend to you." Ho Lin thought his father sounded rather solemn, but in the meantime he was very happy that Dabbitse was his very own to take care of, and he rushed off home. The old man watched the little boy running with a very contented smile.



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IV

THE affection between Ho Lin and Dabbitse became stronger every day. Dabbitse grew rapidly. He was a splendid little calf, full of high spirits. Sometimes Ho Lin was worried at his mischievous ways, but the boy and the animal were so fond of each other that he could not long be angry with the calf. Ho Lin would even shoulder the blame when Dabbitse upset a box of rice all over the ground or trampled on the vegetable bed at the back of the house.

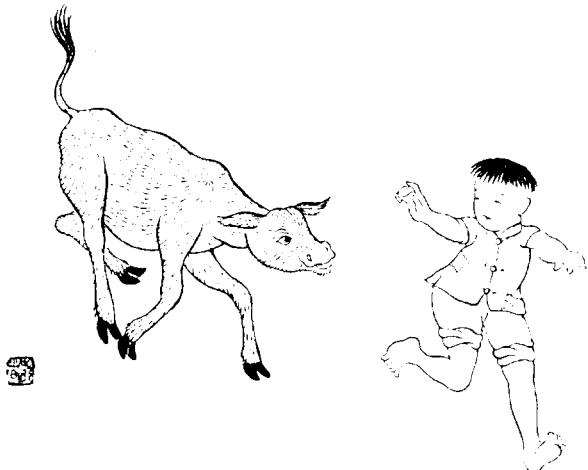
The mother buffalo with her big body had of course never entered the house. But Dabbitse soon found his way in after Ho Lin. Dabbitse was only a little bigger than a chow dog and Obstinate Ho did not mind him coming into the house. Indeed, it seemed to the old man that the only time his son and the calf were not together was when Dabbitse was drinking milk at his mother's udder.

Already Dabbitse showed that he was a true buffalo by his liking for mud and water. In the hot weather he loved to lie in a cool muddy place, and he did not think twice about getting straight up out of the mud and following Ho Lin into the house. This gave Ho Lin a lot of trouble. He always had to be looking out for muddy marks on the chairs, tables and beds, so that he could be sure to remove them before his father saw them. Some of the muddy marks could not be easily and quickly removed. In the end Ho Lin had to try not to go into the house if he noticed that Dabbitse had been in the mud.

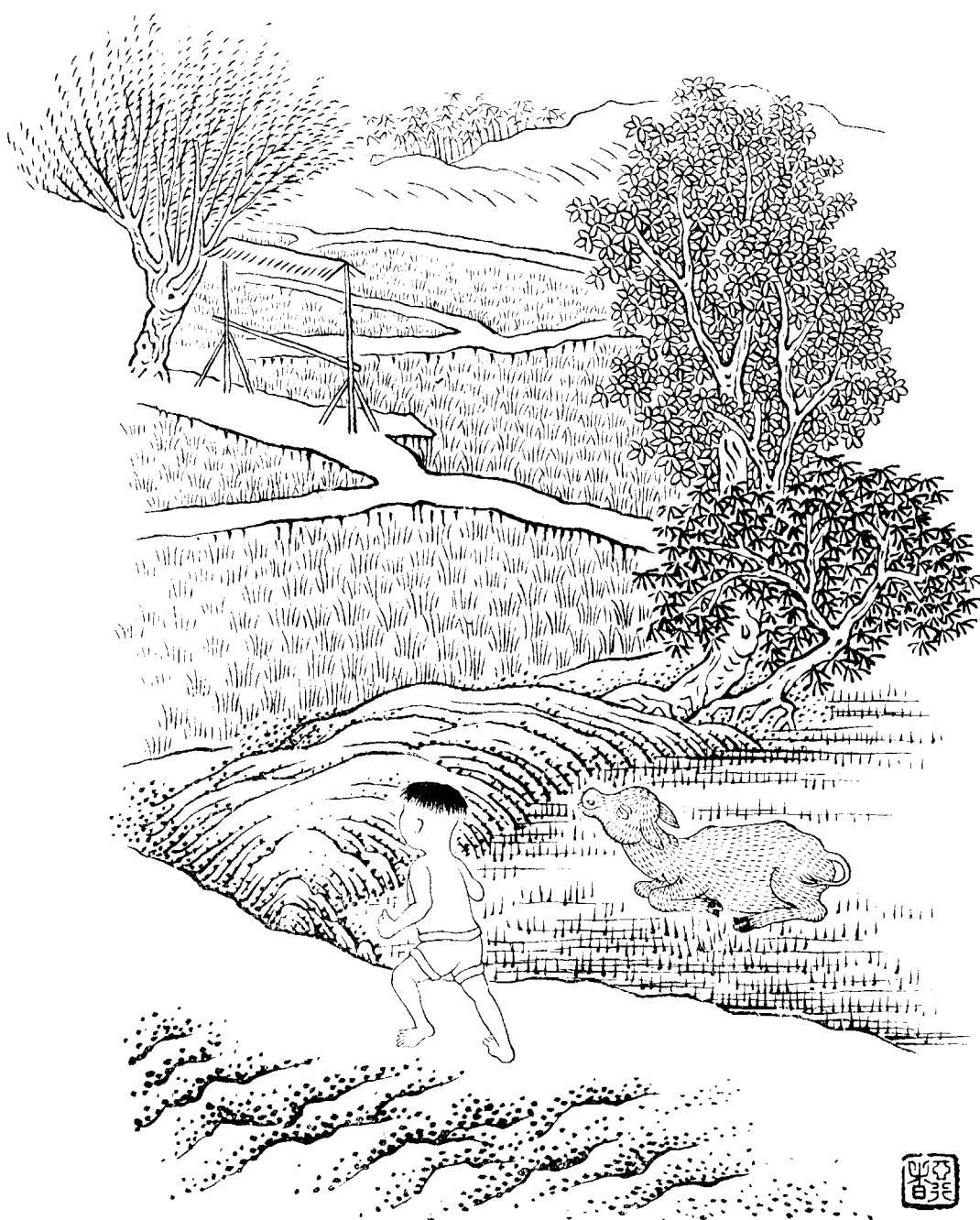
When ploughing time came again Obstinate Ho found at first, rather to his annoyance, that the buffalo calf did not bother to trot alongside its mother up and down the field as calves usually do ; Dabbitse was much too busy playing with Ho Lin on the path round the field. But the mother buffalo seemed

quite content with this arrangement, and so eventually was Obstinate Ho, for it meant that he could get on faster with the ploughing.

Ho Lin seldom begged for a ride on the old buffalo now—he had other things to think about. Sometimes he and Dabbitse would go down to the stream right out of sight of Obstinate Ho. But they always turned up again, so the old man ceased to worry.



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It was late summer now, and terribly hot, the rice field needed more water than ever, and Ho Lin's father, like all the farmers in those parts, had to work the water-wheels incessantly. There was never a great deal of water in the tiny tributary of the only river which flowed anywhere near. Obstinate Ho had made a small pond near his field in which to store water for an emergency, but it was not very much help because the water in it had evaporated by the time it was needed.

Ho Lin and Dabbitse wanted to play in water all the time now. But the small stream where they usually splashed was almost dried up—just here and there some patches of mud were still useful to Dabbitse. He lay in them feeling pleasantly cool and drowsy and made no attempt to move, even if Ho Lin walked away from him.

Ho Lin could not lie down in a patch of mud, so he had to find some other sort of cool place. Sometimes he would stretch out on the grass along the bank or sit on the rugged roots of an old willow tree, shaded by its branches. He seldom stayed long in one place.

One afternoon in the heavy heat Dabbitse lay in his mud bath watching Ho Lin move restlessly from one place to another and wondering why his friend could not make himself happy in mud. Dabbitse felt drowsy. As he watched Ho Lin move further and further away his eyes closed and he fell asleep.

Ho Lin rambled on, hot and uncomfortable, wishing he could find a really cool place. At last he came to a bamboo grove which he had not seen before. The bamboos grew fairly close together, very tall and straight, with lots of leaves at the top through which the sunbeams could hardly penetrate. The cool darkness of the grove looked most inviting—this seemed the very place for which Ho Lin had been searching. He threaded his way in and out between the bamboo stems for a minute or two, then, coming to a big rock he lay down on it and fell sound asleep.

In the meantime Dabbitse had opened his eyes again and was wondering where Ho Lin was. He felt hungry, so he got up out of the mud and found some fresh grass to nibble near by. Still no sign of Ho Lin. Dabbitse, like all animals, had a strong sense of smell. He now began to sniff along the ground to find Ho Lin's track. After going up and down the slope of the bank where he and Ho Lin had been playing he soon picked up the trail, which led straight along the bank and on to the bamboo grove. A full-grown buffalo cannot get into a bamboo grove, because its body is too wide to squeeze between the trunks of the thickly planted bamboos. If it does try to force its way in it will cause a great deal of damage. Little Dabbitse, however, had no difficulty in walking through the narrow spaces between the bamboo stems. He thought he had never been in such a lovely cool place. Everything was new to him here, and he felt excited instead of falling asleep like Ho Lin ; perhaps he had already had enough sleep in the mud. Many young bamboo shoots peeping

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out of the ground offered a tempting smell to his big nose. He tasted one. It was sweet and juicy. Most young animals are greedy and Dabbitse was no exception. Once started he went on and on eating these tasty morsels and forgetting all about his search for Ho Lin. Actually he was moving in the opposite direction to where Ho Lin lay asleep and was approaching the house of the owner of the grove.

Usually the peasant who owns a bamboo grove digs up most of the young shoots in the late spring. He and his family cook and eat some of them and the rest they sell to town dwellers, for bamboo shoots are considered a choice ingredient of many Chinese dishes. A few young shoots are left to grow up and replace the old bamboos which are cut down for sale to make bamboo tools, chairs or beds. A farmer who owns a bamboo grove is considered well-to-do.

Naturally, therefore, no grove owner would be pleased to have lots of his young bamboo shoots destroyed by a buffalo calf. Dabbitse was by now quite near the edge of the grove and was still crunching busily and making quite a noise. A boy a little older than Ho Lin, the son of the owner, heard the noise. He ran back to tell his father and they both returned with a rope to catch the calf. They did not go straight up to Dabbitse, but walked stealthily round behind him. Then they threw the rope round Dabbitse from behind. Dabbitse was so frightened that he gave a terrific bound and broke down two or three fair-sized bamboos. At once he began to fight to free himself of the horrible thing round his body. He was already very strong although so young. The owner of the grove and his son had a hard job to keep hold of the rope. Finally Dabbitse became tired and struggled less violently, and they managed to catch him and lead him into the yard, where they tied him to the trunk of a big camphor tree.

Presently the man and the son went back into the grove again to see exactly how much damage had been done to the young shoots and the older plants. The owner was determined to get compensation from Dabbitse's master, who would surely come in search of the calf.

While the struggle was going on Ho Lin, although some distance away, was awakened by the noise. He had of course no idea what was happening, and as he felt tired he lay quiet, enjoying the cool air. He was but half awake when the son of the owner came upon him and pointed him out to his father, saying : "He must have been with the calf." The angry man suddenly felt furious and gave Ho Lin a resounding slap on the face. Ho Lin sat up thoroughly startled, putting his hand to the sharp smarting pain in his cheek and seeing a very angry face just above him. This was the second smack he had received in his young life. The memory of his cruel aunt increased his dread of this angry face now looking at him.

"This is no place for you to sleep," said the man.

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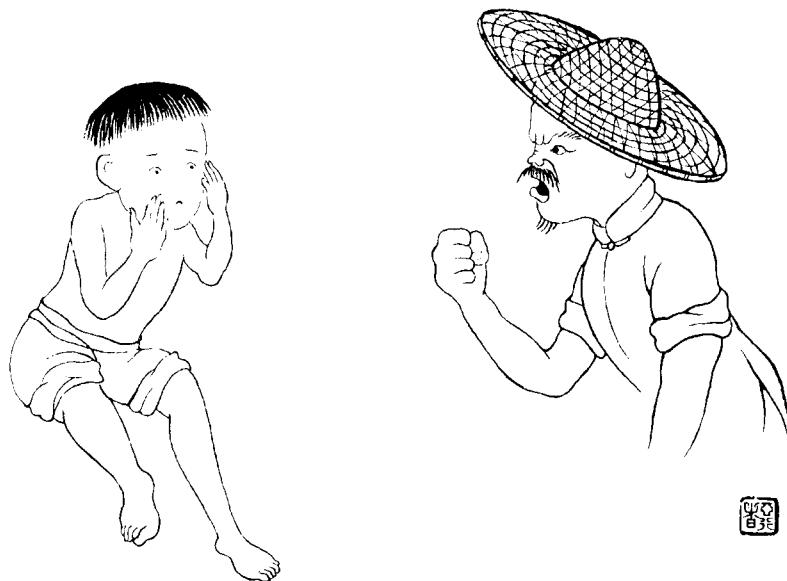


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"I was tired in the heat and the grove was so cool," answered Ho Lin, "but I did not mean to go to sleep here. I am sorry."

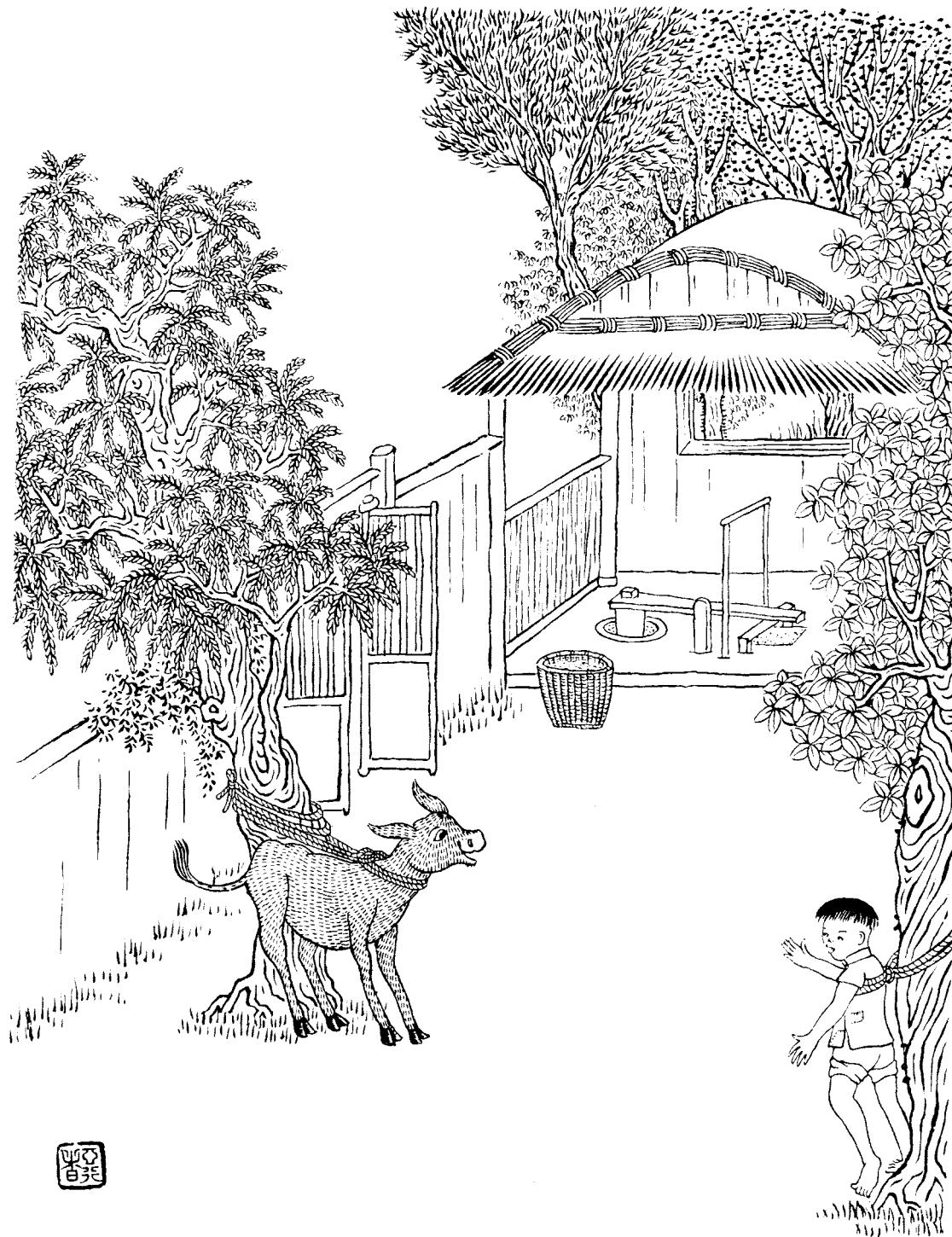
"Oh, you are sorry? You should find out to whom a grove belongs before you enter it. Look what a mess you have made here." With this the man gave Ho Lin another smack before the boy could speak and began to push him along towards the house. The man's son was laughing nastily at Ho Lin's discomfiture.

"What is your name?" the owner continued. "Who is your father? He must pay for the damage."



Ho Lin did not know what to say. He did not understand this talk of damage, though he could see the broken bamboos and trampled ground as they went on. Then they came in sight of the yard and there was Dabbitse tied to a tree. His first instinct was to rush towards Dabbitse and free him, but the man's firm grasp of his shoulder prevented him. Two or three times Ho Lin tried to run forward, but each time he was pulled back roughly, and the last time he tripped over a stone and almost fell to the ground. He could not bear Dabbitse's pathetic look.

By this time Ho Lin realised that Dabbitse must have done all the damage in the grove and he felt very cross with himself for having fallen asleep. He did not blame Dabbitse at all, but only himself. He then wondered what this man



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might be going to do with them both. Over and over again Ho Lin told the man how sorry he was, and begged that Dabbitse and he should be allowed to go home. But the man was determined to have compensation. "You will stay where you are," he told Ho Lin. "You need not hope to go home until your father has come to pay me for my bamboos and the young shoots. He is certain to come to look for you." Ho Lin had by now been tied to another tree some distance from Dabbitse, so that they could not comfort each other. The man's son went on making fun of Ho Lin for a while and then went off with his father.

Dabbitse looked more pathetic than ever and kept straining to break away and get to his young master. It seemed as if he wanted to explain how it had all happened, how he had been looking for Ho Lin and had followed his trail into the grove, but had there found new and exciting things to eat and had forgotten why he had come. Ho Lin looked pathetic too. He was worrying about his old father, who would have to pay for Dabbitse's depredations. The afternoon seemed unusually long. Ho Lin felt hungry and drowsy, leaning against his tree. Dabbitse gave up trying to free himself and lay down at the foot of his tree.

In the meantime Obstinate Ho had finished his day's work in the field and was gathering his tools to go home. Ho Lin usually helped him to do this, and the old man looked round to see where the boy was playing. There was no sign of him, or of Dabbitse, which was odd at this time of the evening. But the old man did not wait long in the field, for he was tired and wanted his supper. But when he had cooked his usual evening meal of some rice and a few soya bean sprouts and other fresh vegetables out of his garden, and Ho Lin and Dabbitse were still missing, Obstinate Ho really began to be worried. He could not eat much and presently set out in search of them.

He knew all their usual haunts, so he went to them first, but without result. He then walked further, choosing his direction quite at random. It happened to be the way to the bamboo grove. Very soon the grove owner saw the old man approaching and rushed towards him shouting his complaint before Obstinate Ho was near enough to see his son and Dabbitse tied up in the yard. Ho Lin's father was a good-natured honest man who had never had a quarrel with anybody in his life. Actually he very seldom met anybody, he was always so busy in his field. Completely taken aback by the other man's furious outburst, he listened patiently. As they neared the yard and he saw Ho Lin, Obstinate Ho began to scold his son to soothe the man's anger. The man took no notice but went on shouting about the damage and the amount of compensation which must be paid to him. He was demanding not only the market price of all the bamboo shoots eaten, but the price they would have fetched if they had grown into tall bamboo trees. This was a sum quite beyond the



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old man's ~~imagine~~. He never had more than enough for his own and his son's simple needs. And he did not know how he was going to meet this outrageous demand. He thought some miracle would have to happen to help him out.

Ho Lin was sobbing bitterly and there seemed to be tears in Dabbitse's eyes too. Obstinate Ho looked at the boy tenderly and knew that he must find some way to settle the matter. He began to beg the man to have pity on his son's youth and foolishness, and said that he would do his utmost to pay any reasonable demand. After a good deal more talk and bargaining the man agreed to accept market price for the shoots eaten. As Obstinate Ho could not pay in cash, he promised to give instead a small pig and a hen, which he had hoped to sell just before the New Year Festival, so as to be able to buy some new clothes for himself and his son.

After Obstinate Ho had promised to bring the pig and hen himself the next day, Ho Lin and Dabbitse were released to go home with him. The old man must have been feeling very downcast and upset, but he spoke no word of blame to Ho Lin. The three of them walked along slowly in the gathering darkness. The deep stillness, broken only by the patter of Dabbitse's hooves and an occasional sob from Ho Lin, intensified their feeling of depression.

When they reached home Dabbitse was at once led to the stable. The old man put some food before Ho Lin, but the boy could not eat at all. He suddenly burst into uncontrollable weeping. "Father, do speak to me. I shall never cause you trouble like this again. Please say something," he pleaded. Obstinate Ho urged the boy to eat without referring to anything else. Ho Lin felt guiltier than ever. After a while the old man said: "I think Dabbitse is big enough to have a lead through his nose."

Chinese farmers lead their water-buffaloes by means of a long hemp rope attached to either side of a piece of hard wood or iron passed through both nostrils of the buffalo's long stretched-out nose. This may seem strange and cruel, but it has been the general practice for thousands of years. It is probably no more cruel than the bit in a horse's mouth.

Ho Lin was shocked to think of his little friend already having a lead through his nose. He felt sure it would hurt Dabbitse. He begged his father not to punish Dabbitse in this way. "It was all my fault," said Ho Lin.

Obstinate Ho still did not speak directly of what had just happened, but replied: "Dabbitse must have a lead sooner or later. It will not hurt him much. It will not be any worse for him than a young girl having a hole pierced in the lobe of her ear so that she can wear ear-rings. Dabbitse's mother has a lead. Every buffalo has a lead."

Ho Lin still did not feel satisfied. The only women he had ever seen were his mother and aunt. He could not remember that either of them had worn

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ear-rings. Of course he knew that the old buffalo had a lead, but that seemed a different matter to him. In the end, just before they both went to bed, Obstinate Ho had to promise the boy not to put a lead on Dabbitse.



OBSTINATE HO's habitual grim expression now grew grimmer, partly because he felt himself to be growing older and the strain of the field work was telling, partly because he felt he ought to be working even harder to make good the compensation he had had to pay the grove owner on Ho Lin's behalf.

Ho Lin was growing older too. He was now allowed to take the old buffalo out to graze, which saved his father a good deal of time. Dabbitse always went with them, and Ho Lin had to give all his attention to keeping the animal out of mischief while the mother buffalo grazed.

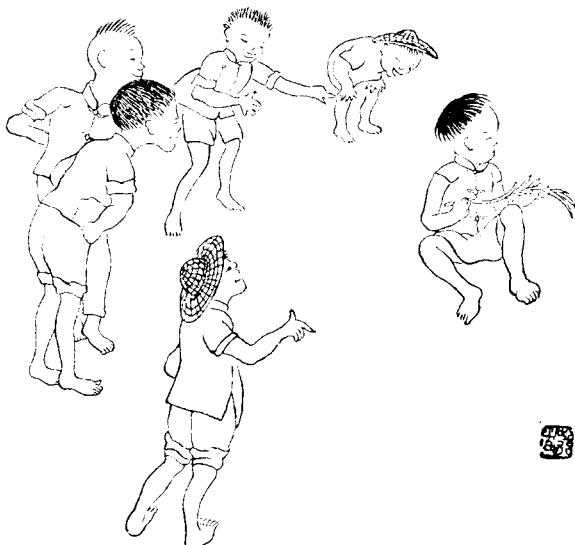
One of the favourite grazing grounds was a stretch of open grassland along a hill slope not far from Ho Lin's home, where there was very good grass and, at the bottom of the hill, a fair-sized stream. Other herdboys besides Ho Lin came here with their buffaloes. Generally there were five or six of them and one little girl named Hsin-hwa or Apricot Blossom. The son of the grove-owner was one of the boys. Although Ho Lin kept as much by himself as possible, this boy took every opportunity of teasing him. He told all the rest the whole story of what had happened in the bamboo grove and how his father had smacked Ho Lin's face. The other boys thought this very funny and gathered round Ho Lin to laugh at him. Ho Lin felt very embarrassed and unhappy. He tried to look as if he did not mind being laughed at, and contrived ways to get away from the group. His father strongly advised him to avoid the other boys altogether.

Apricot Blossom was different from the rest. When she was there she would take Ho Lin's part and urge the boys to stop teasing him. Often she joined

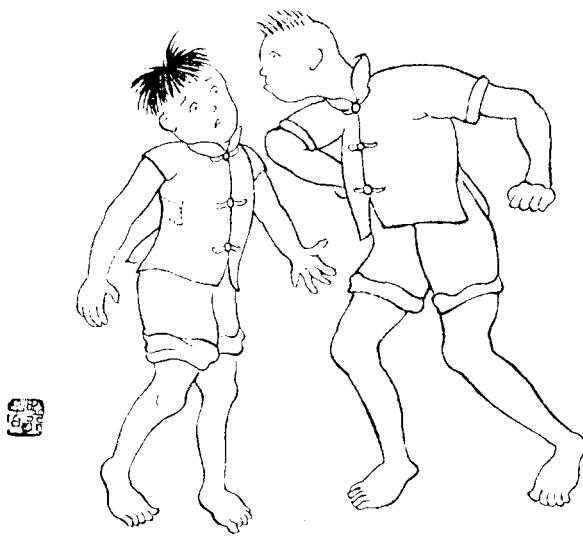
Ho Lin when he went off to play by himself. He felt grateful to her but could not express his gratitude in words. He rarely spoke to her. Apricot Blossom, on the contrary, chattered away gaily and did not disguise her preference for Ho Lin's company to that of the other boys. Ho Lin appreciated this but was still happiest when quite alone.



As soon as he reached the grazing ground Ho Lin always wound the long rope round the old buffalo's horns and let her free. The other



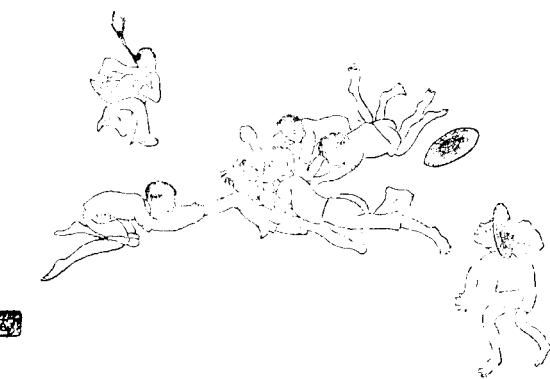
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boys did the same with their buffaloes. There were two other calves besides Dabbitse, both a little younger than he, and the three youngsters usually played together, Dabbitse taking the lead. Dabbitse's horns were just beginning to be noticeable; they made him look very handsome, and although, when he was playing, he kept tossing his head as if he wanted to shake them off, he was really anxious to display them. A few months later the two younger calves began to feel their horns appearing.

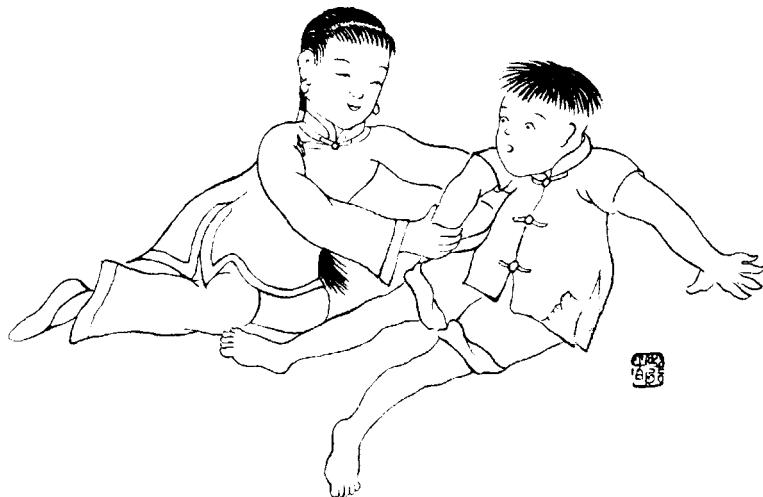
One day when Dabbitse and his companions were as usual chasing each other playfully about the middle of the hill slope a little apart from the older buffaloes, suddenly—perhaps because they were all now rather too conscious of their horns—Dabbitse and one of the others ceased to play and went for each other in earnest, heads lowered, butting with all their might. At once the herdboys rushed to stop the fight. Ho Lin ran faster than any of them, for he felt that he should have been keeping a better eye on Dabbitse. But none of them could do anything. They shouted and shouted at the young buffaloes. They also tried to get near enough to them to separate them, but Dabbitse and his opponent took no notice. Presently Dabbitse seemed to be getting the advantage and a thrust from one of his horns tore some skin off the other calf's neck and made it bleed.

This angered the herdboy of the wounded buffalo and he flew at Ho Lin and hit him on the face, telling him to stop his calf attacking other people's. Ho Lin said he had been trying just as hard as all the other boys to stop the fight. But before he had finished speaking the boy struck him again. At this the grove-owner's son began to encourage Ho Lin's tormentor,



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and soon all the boys began jabbing at Ho Lin. Egging each other on, they became so excited that soon Ho Lin was flat on the ground, his arms and legs being pulled in all directions. Next moment Apricot Blossom appeared running up the hill slope, shouting to the boys that it was unfair and mean for all of them to attack Ho Lin at once. Each of the boys knew this very well and felt ashamed that a girl should have seen them behaving so badly. But the boy whose buffalo had been attacked by Dabbitse told her to mind her own business. This infuriated Apricot Blossom. With set face she said that she would go home and tell her elders. The boys, like all boys, did not want to face their elders after doing something wrong, so they laughed loudly at Apricot Blossom and ran away, leaving Ho Lin on the ground. Dabbitse and the other calf had long since stopped fighting and were grazing quietly along the slope.



Ho Lin lay silent. He had a lump on his head and his nose was bleeding. Apricot Blossom stooped over him to ask how he was and whether he could get up. Instead of answering her Ho Lin looked up at her curiously and asked: "Have you worn ear-rings long? Did you feel any pain when the holes were pierced through your ears?" He seemed to have forgotten all about his own troubles.

"Yes, I have worn ear-rings a long time. It wasn't painful when the holes were made. Anyway, I don't remember it now. But why do you ask me that?" she added, as she helped Ho Lin to get up.

"It doesn't matter," was the cryptic reply.

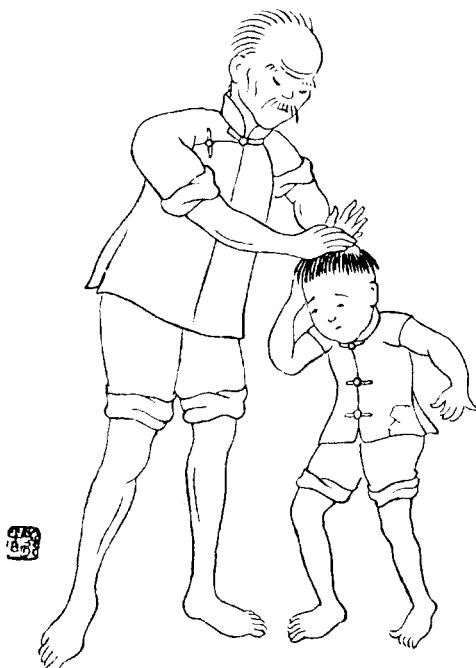
Apricot Blossom would have liked to see Ho Lin home, but he did not want to go back before the usual time. She stayed with him for a while, but finding that he did not seem to know she was there, she finally went away.

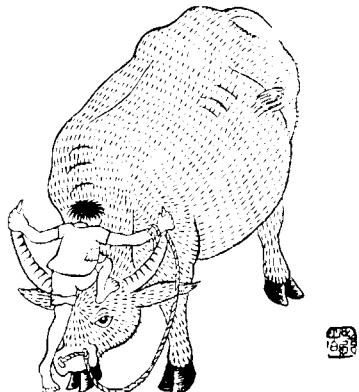
When Ho Lin arrived home with Dabbitse and the mother buffalo, Obstinate

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Ho did not notice anything wrong, although Ho Lin was moving less easily than usual. At their evening meal the boy tried not to draw attention to himself, but every now and again he raised his hand instinctively to the painful lump on his head. Obstinate Ho noticed at last and asked him what was the matter. "Nothing," said Ho Lin. After the meal the old man drew him close and found the lump on his head. Still Ho Lin did not want to worry him by telling him what had happened. But the old man insisted and at last the boy could not help pouring out the whole story.

Obstinate Ho was very troubled. Again he realised keenly that he had not the time to look after his son properly. He wondered if he could have a talk with the fathers of those boys who were so unkind to Ho Lin. But he was so unaccustomed to meeting people and felt so old that he didn't think they would listen to him; indeed, he feared that the boys might even treat Ho Lin worse when they met again. Ho Lin saw that his father was thinking deeply. He waited quietly until at last Obstinate Ho broke the silence by saying that Ho Lin must not take the buffalo to that particular grazing ground again and that he must try not to meet those boys at all. Ho Lin promised. He begged his father not to worry about the lump and said it wasn't very painful. But Obstinate Ho still looked very sad. Before going to bed he said that he would make a lead for Dabbitse at once. Ho Lin was reconciled to the idea now; but his father did not realise that it was because he had talked to Apricot Blossom about her ear-rings.





VII

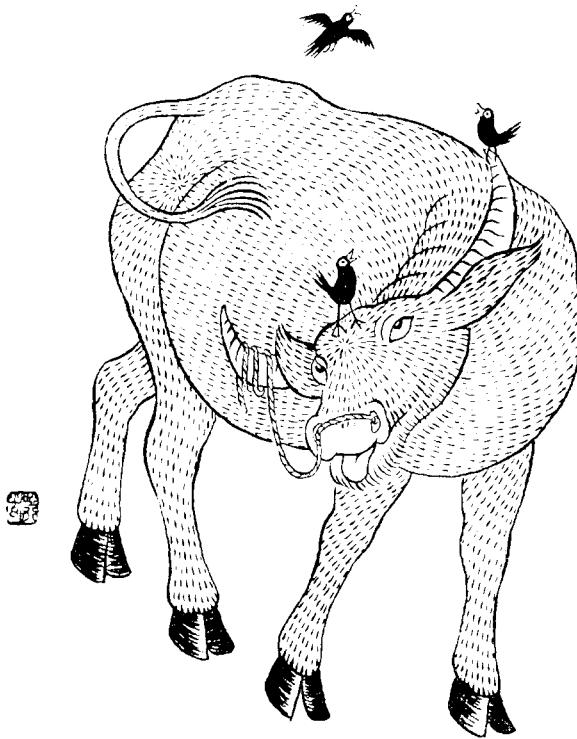
It was some months later. Dabbitse had grown accustomed to his lead. He was nearly as big now as his mother, but still had his own mischievous nature. It would be some time yet before he became as quiet and calm as most full-grown Chinese water-buffaloes. Ho Lin made use of Dabbitse's lead when he was riding him to guide him in the right direction. He enjoyed riding on Dabbitse; mounting him was still a problem. When Ho Lin wanted to mount the mother buffalo she would lower her head to let him catch her horns firmly and place his feet in the middle of her forehead between them ; then she would raise her head and he would crawl along her back. By degrees Dabbitse learnt to lower his head too.

It had become necessary for Dabbitse to help with the ploughing, for the mother buffalo's health was failing. Dabbitse was very strong. Obstinate Ho was delighted that the young buffalo could at last be useful, though he still found the mother easier to manage. If Dabbitse was ploughing, Ho Lin took the old buffalo to graze and vice versa. Dabbitse still wanted to play about on the grazing ground and seemed to think he could try any trick on his young friend. The blackbirds and magpies seemed often to join in games with him. One or two blackbirds would alight on his back or horns and perch there for a while, their light bodies making no impression at all on Dabbitse. Then they would begin to hop about. If they tickled his forehead with their claws Dabbitse would suddenly fling his head back as if to catch them. The blackbirds would take to the wing for a second or two and then back they would come and the game would begin all over again. Perhaps this time they would tickle his back and he would swish them away with his tail. Ho Lin loved to watch them. Sometimes the birds would burst into merry song as they stood

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on Dabbitse's back and would pay no attention to all the tossings and shakings. Dabbitse did not seem to realise that birds do not mind such movements, being used to the swaying of tree branches in the wind. Ho Lin laughed at the fuss Dabbitse made and always hoped the birds wouldn't fly away.

Often, now that Dabbitse was grown up, he tramped about on the hillside ignoring Ho Lin. Sometimes he grew obstinate and would lie in muddy water for hours, refusing to obey Ho Lin's orders. This troubled Ho Lin, but what-

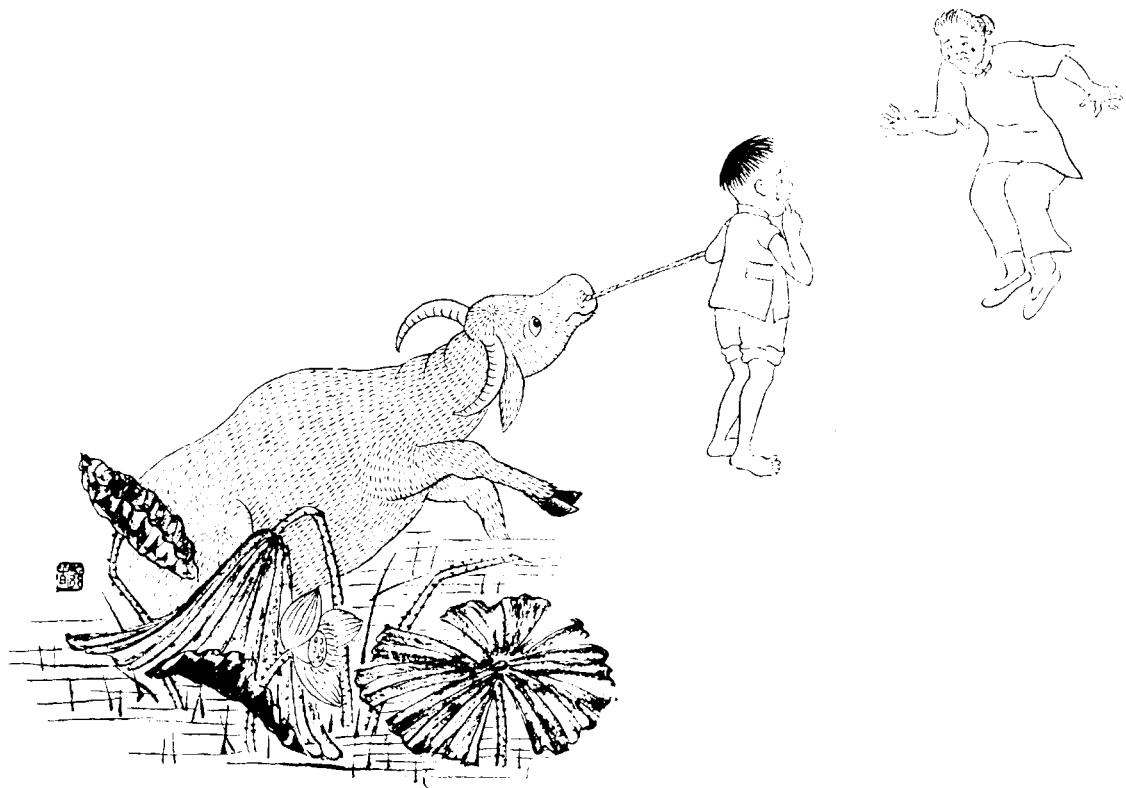


ever Dabbitse did the boy's affection for him grew no less—on the contrary, it increased, for he saw how helpful Dabbitse could be in the ricefield. And he never forgot his father's prophecy that Dabbitse would be useful to him one day.

When the great heat of early summer came again, Dabbitse grew fonder than ever of cold water. One evening, as Ho Lin was riding him home, they reached the point where the path forked, and, instead of following as usual the path which led home, Dabbitse took the other path. The reason was that he had spied the gleam of water in the distance. Ho Lin had often noticed this gleam

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of water and wondered whether it was a pond or a lake, but he had never explored ; whenever he reached the fork he was always in too much of a hurry to get home. This evening he tugged at Dabbitse's rope to pull him back in the right direction, but Dabbitse refused to be denied one more bathe. As they were a little earlier than usual Ho Lin decided not to thwart the animal and allowed himself to be carried towards the water without further struggle.



A number of tall old trees prevented his seeing how big the stretch of water was. Soon Dabbitse reached a gap in the trees, went straight through it and waded into the water. It was quite a big pond. Ho Lin was used to sitting on the mother buffalo's back while she swam, but this was his first experience of being on Dabbitse's back in the water.

Dabbitse swam steadily. Presently Ho Lin began to think it really time to be going home. Tugging at the rope, he made all sorts of noises by way of urging Dabbitse to turn back. It was useless. On and on the young buffalo



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swam. On the further bank were masses of lotus flowers in bloom, and great lotus leaves rose up out of the water like so many little umbrellas. Ho Lin could not help enjoying the sight in spite of his anxiety. The boy opened his arms wide as if to embrace the lovely flowers. A moment later he was horror-stricken at the realisation that Dabbitse was bearing him right into the midst of them and that the exquisite flowers were being broken and trampled in all directions. Ho Lin felt desperate. He had tried every means he knew of turning Dabbitse back and preventing further destruction.

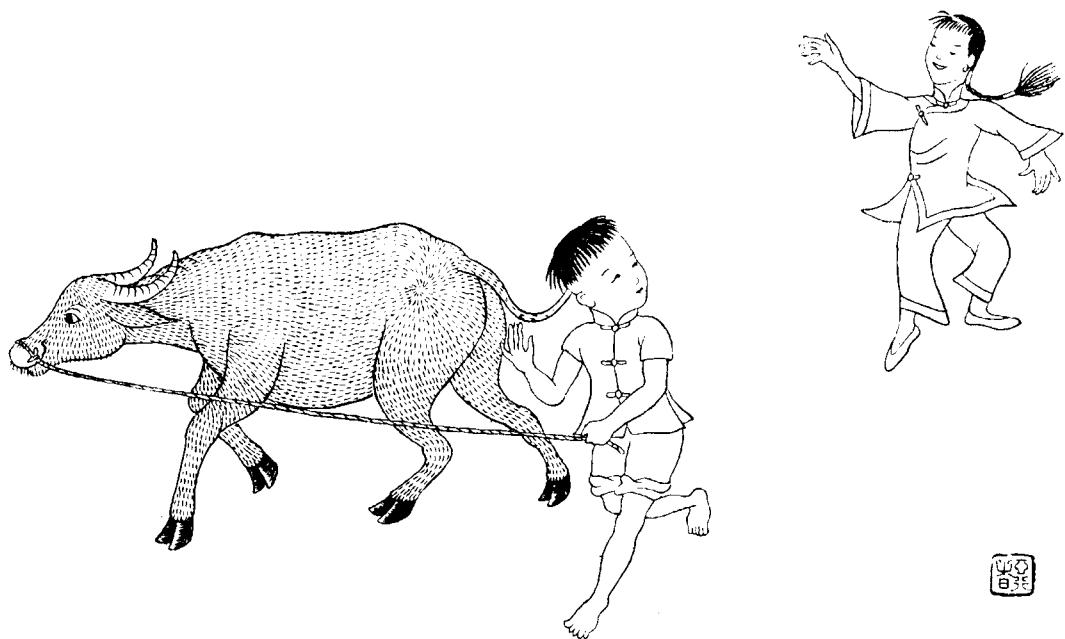
Then he saw a woman come running towards the pond from a house not far away. She must have noticed that something unusual was going on. She was, thought Ho Lin, probably the owner of the pond and the lotus flowers. And indeed it became clear almost at once that this was so, for as soon as she saw what a mess the buffalo had made she burst into tears. Then she began to scold Ho Lin furiously for letting his buffalo behave in this way.

Ho Lin was already sufficiently frightened, and when he saw the woman in such a state he too burst into tears. He felt sure his father would again have to



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pay heavy compensation for the damage, and he did not know how he could face him. Fortunately the woman did not prove as bad-tempered as the owner of the bamboo grove. After a while she seemed to take pity on Ho Lin, who was sobbing his heart out. But she insisted that the boy and Dabbitse should come with her to the house and wait there until her husband came back and settled the matter. Ho Lin feared he knew what this would mean, and all the way to the house he kept saying how sorry he was and how hard he had tried to turn Dabbitse away from the lotus flowers. He begged that the woman and



her husband should punish him as severely as they liked, but not tell his father anything of the matter, because he did not want to cause his old father more sadness and worry than he already had to bear. The woman was moved that the boy should think of this.

It was not long before the husband came home, accompanied by their young daughter. To Ho Lin's astonishment who should this be but Apricot Blossom ! Apricot Blossom seemed as surprised as Ho Lin. She had been out with the buffalo as usual and had met her father on her way home from the grazing ground. They had both seen the damage as they passed the pond, and Apricot Blossom was crying for the lotus flowers she loved. The father was very angry

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indeed when he heard how the flowers had been destroyed. But his wife told him how upset the boy was and how worried lest his old father would have to pay. At the same time Apricot Blossom told her father that she was very fond of Ho Lin and related how much Ho Lin had suffered from the other herdboys, though she still felt sad that Dabbitse should have made such a mess of her lotus flowers. Finally the man said that he thought Ho Lin had surely had a good fright and lesson, and the matter could rest at that.

Apricot Blossom asked Ho Lin a great many questions. She wanted to know why he no longer came to the same grazing ground, and where he did go now, and a hundred other questions. Her parents seemed quite pleased that she should know this quiet, well-behaved boy. At last Ho Lin said he must go home or his father would worry about him. Apricot Blossom begged him to come sometimes to the old grazing ground. Ho Lin said he would, though he added that he must keep away from the other herdboys because of his promise to his father. He thanked the man and his wife and also Apricot Blossom for their kindness to him. Then he and Dabbitse set off for home and arrived without further adventures.

Obstinate Ho did not even notice that they were a little later than usual.

VII

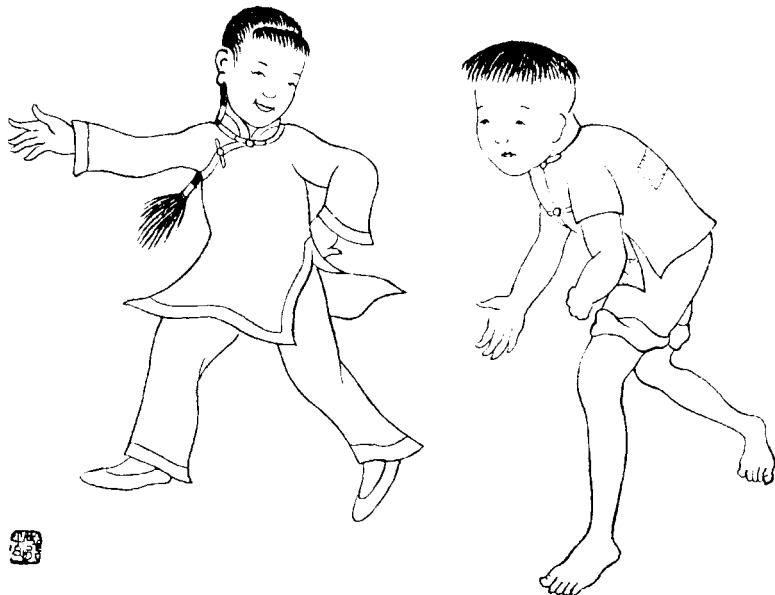
HO LIN kept his promise to take Dabbitse or the mother buffalo occasionally to the old grazing ground, and thus he and Apricot Blossom met from time to time. Their friendship grew deeper. Ho Lin was full of gratitude to her and to her parents for their kindness over the lotus flowers incident. On several occasions Apricot Blossom took the boy to her home, where his quietness and unassuming ways began to endear him to her parents. He seldom referred to his own home and circumstances, but was always willing to answer questions.

They learned that Ho Lin had lost his mother when he was only three and that his old father was very poor despite a life of hard work. Apricot Blossom's mother, out of a generous desire to help the boy, would sometimes get her daughter to bring him to their home early some afternoons, so that she could take off his worn clothes and mend them before he returned to his own home in the evening. None of Ho Lin's clothes had been mended since his mother died. He rarely had a new garment, for his father had been short of money since paying the funeral expenses, and when these had been met there was the compensation to the grove-owner to be paid. Obstinate Ho would have liked to do much more for his son, but it was impossible. His own clothes were as shabby as his son's. The fact that Ho Lin had seen so few other boys was

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fortunate in one way, for it never occurred to him that there was anything wrong with his clothes. But now he was very grateful to his little friend's mother for making him look neater and tidier.

Apricot Blossom's family seemed to be comfortably off. The girl's ear-rings were of silver, whereas the ear-rings of poor peasant girls are generally of copper wire or even cotton string. Her clothes were not of specially good quality but they were always clean and neat. Ho Lin occasionally realised in a vague way that if his mother had been alive his clothes would have been



cared for too, but he never dwelt on the thought or felt envious of Apricot Blossom.

Sometimes the mother would give Ho Lin home-made rice-cakes or a few sweets. These were a great treat for the boy, who had never tasted such dainties before. Sweetmeats are usually made by farmers' wives and often cannot be bought in country districts. Ho Lin always took his father home a share of anything he was given; an indication, thought Apricot Blossom's mother, of the inherent goodness of his nature.

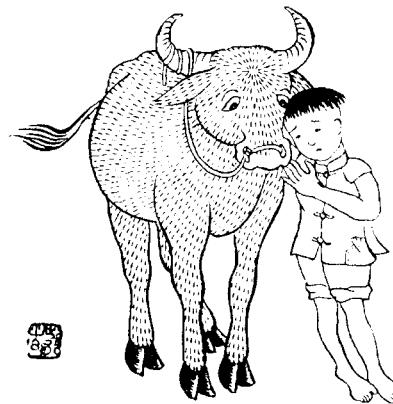
Obstinate Ho said that Apricot Blossom's family was extremely kind, and he too appreciated his son's thoughtfulness. He was also very glad that Ho Lin had made friends with Apricot Blossom and her family. But he could not help

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feeling anxious lest the boy become dissatisfied with his own home by comparison with the comfortable way in which his friends lived. He remembered how, when he was himself a boy of Ho Lin's age and his brother Timid Ho was only ten months old, he had lost both his parents. The baby was looked after by the wife of one of his father's friends while he had lived and worked with a well-to-do peasant family. He also remembered how he had envied his master's children when they were given sweets. Obstinate Ho felt glad that his own son had not gone to live in another family and that the boy was sweet-natured and self-controlled, but at the same time he did not want him to be too severely exposed to temptation ; so he did not encourage Ho Lin to visit Apricot Blossom's home, though he never actually forbade it. Apricot Blossom had come to Ho Lin's once or twice. Obstinate Ho could not help liking this girl with her lovable face and irresistible smile. Her parents he did not meet, chiefly because of his obstinate habit of keeping to himself. But recently the old man had not been feeling very well and this made him go so far as to get Ho Lin to ask Apricot Blossom's father to bring some medicine from the town.

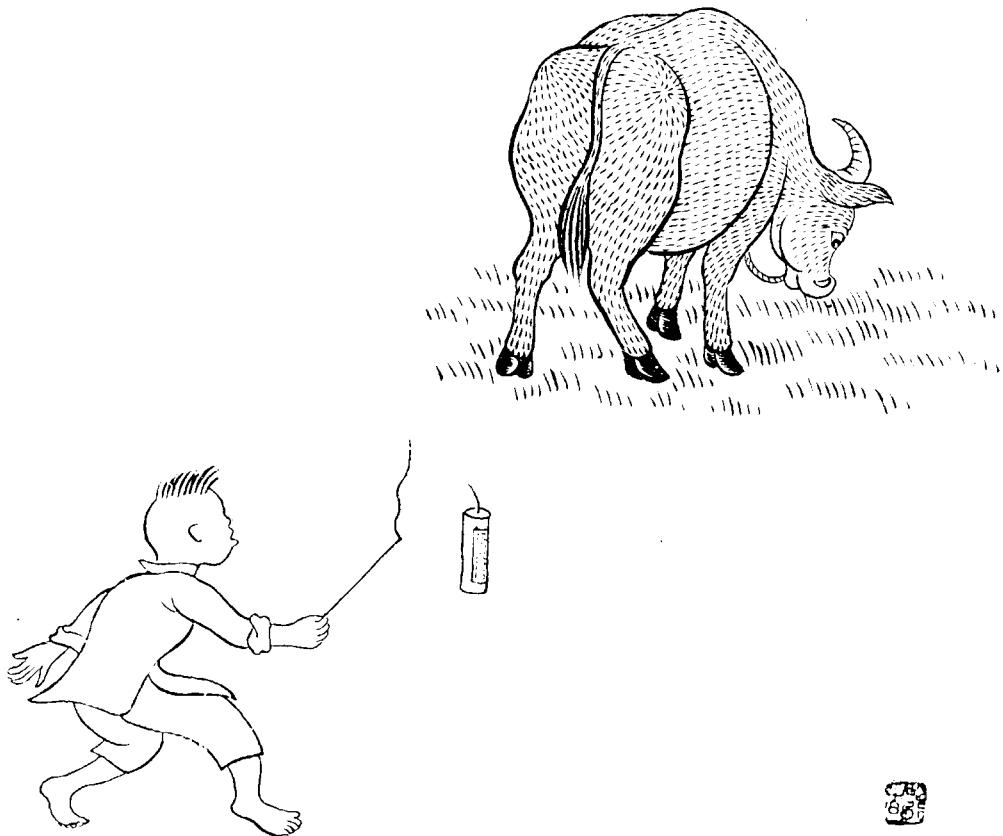
Dabbitse's mother was not very well either. She was a great age for a water-buffalo, and hardly ever drew the plough. At last came a day when she did not try even to stand up in the stable and had no strength to eat. Next morning she died. Obstinate Ho felt very sad ; he and the old buffalo had worked together for so many years. How thankful he was that Dabbitse was there to take her place, for he could not possibly have afforded to buy a new buffalo. He felt specially grateful to the mother buffalo for having lived until her son was fully grown. Some of the villagers came to help him bury the old animal ; Ho Lin was still too young to do much heavy digging. The mother buffalo was buried on the hillside some distance from the house. Ho Lin, thinking of the many times he had taken her out to graze on that very slope, felt sad too.

Dabbitse also had a pathetic look that morning and seemed to move more slowly when Ho Lin took him out to graze. Perhaps it was just the sad feeling in the boy's own heart which made him think so. Anyhow he comforted his friend, stroking his head and back and saying : "Dabbitse, don't grieve too much. I have no mother, and now you have none. We are both motherless, and must stick to each other even closer. My father often tells me that you will do a lot of useful work for me one day, and I will look after you in return. Don't grieve."



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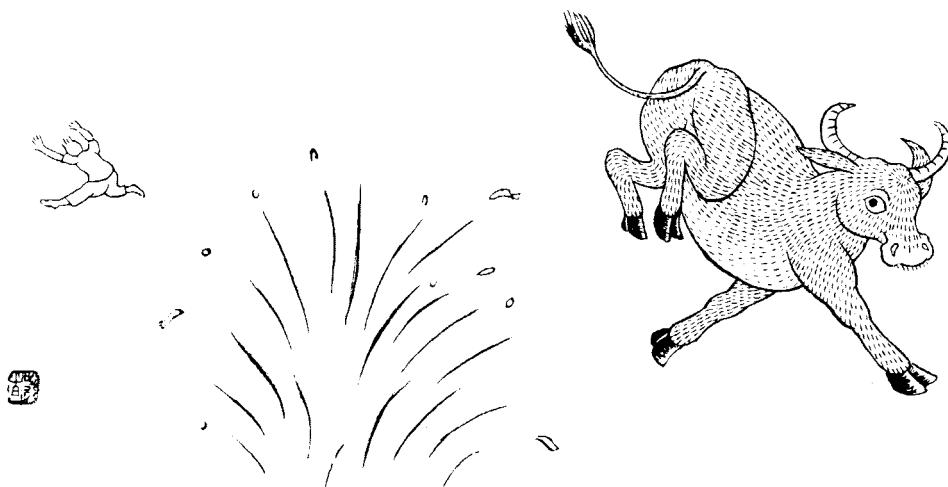
A few days later Ho Lin and Dabbitse had forgotten their sad feelings and were amusing themselves as usual. Ho Lin was always careful to keep quite by himself on the grazing ground, although, since Apricot Blossom's father had spoken severely to them, the other herdboys had not been so ready to tease Ho Lin if Apricot Blossom was there ; they knew that if she told her father



they had been up to their tricks again he would come and give them a beating. On this day Apricot Blossom did not appear. Perhaps she had been invited to spend the day with some relations, for it was the time of the Lantern Festival. Apricot Blossom had many relations and was often invited to their homes. She always told Ho Lin all about her experiences next time she saw him. So Ho Lin played alone.

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It was very early spring, not yet too warm ; indeed, Ho Lin had to keep running up and down the hillside to keep himself warm enough. It was then that the other boys, noticing that Ho Lin was not paying much attention to Dabbitse, seized their chance. One of them had brought with him a big fire-cracker such as is let off by most families during the Lantern Festival. Stealing up behind Dabbitse he let the fire-cracker off. The explosion was terrific. Dabbitse had never heard anything like it before. The awful thing, whatever it was, seemed right on the top of him. He bolted up the slope, panic-stricken. The boys roared with laughter. Ho Lin, as soon as he saw what had happened, ran as hard as he could after Dabbitse.

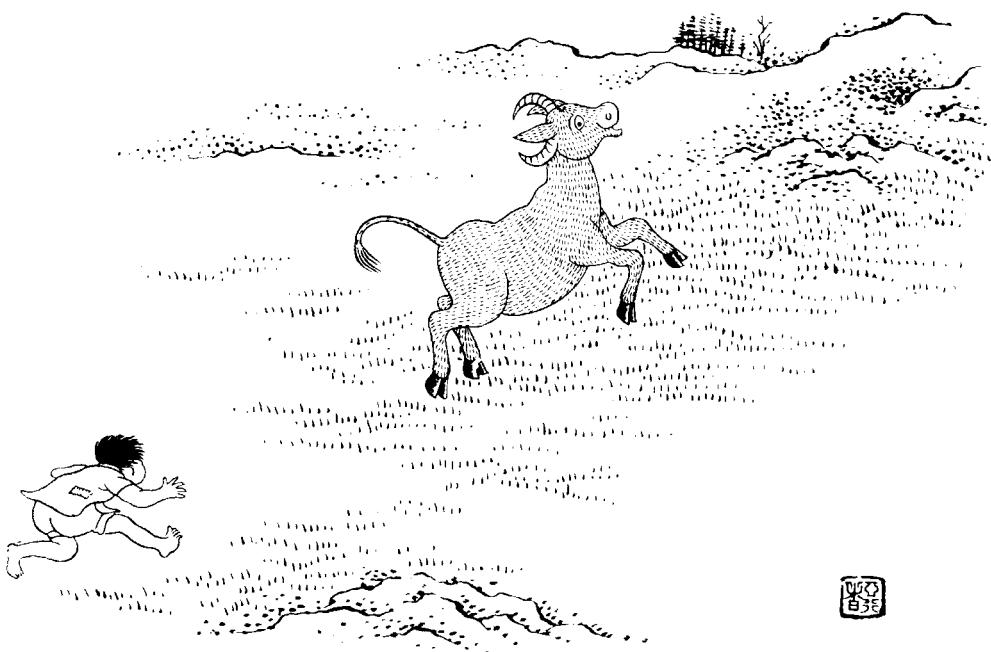


But Dabbitse was already out of sight, bounding on and on in terror. He finally came to a halt near a big wood. Ho Lin ran and ran to catch him. When he got to the top of the hill, though very tired and exhausted, he looked all round but could find no trace of Dabbitse. He had to go on at random. He knew he must find the buffalo before going home. His father would not be able to go on cultivating the rice-field if he had no buffalo, and they would starve. And how could he live without the friendship of Dabbitse ?

It grew dark and the boy was hungry. He leant his back against a big pine tree to rest a little. He was terribly sleepy. But the treetops and the darkness surrounding him were full of strange, disturbing noises. He slept, dozing intermittently, waking again and again in terror and trembling. He was a timid boy who often suffered severely from fear. Never had he forgotten one frightful night in a heavy storm of lightning and thunder when he was lying in

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bed alone, trying not to wake his father, who he knew was very tired. When he was most afraid, he did not dare to cry. His mind was tormented with visions of horrible creatures such as he had never seen, who would come and get him if he made a noise. There was no lamp in the room. Now, in the darkness, he cowered against the tree trunk, hardly daring to breathe. Presently it began to rain. Ho Lin's few clothes were soon soaked. But the noise of the rain pattering through the leaves was a real noise and seemed to Ho Lin a



friendly one. He remembered that he must pursue Dabbitse. His old father must be worrying about them both now. But he had no idea in which direction Dabbitse might lie and how far away his home was. He stumbled on through the dark and the rain too tired to think. Very soon he fell into a hollow at the root of a tree. And this time he dropped sound asleep in a moment.

Just about the same time Obstinate Ho fell asleep from exhaustion too. When he had gone home from the field and cooked the evening meal and there was no sign of Ho Lin and Dabbitse returning from the grazing ground he felt worried and could not sit down to his supper. Ho Lin and Dabbitse were his

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only treasures. The old man waited an hour or so uneasily and then, still without supper, he set off in search of the truants. It was already dark, but he knew his way. First he went to Apricot Blossom's home to see if Ho Lin had been there. This was the first time he had met the girl's parents. Apricot Blossom's father offered to join in the search, but Obstinate Ho did not want to trouble him and said that by now Ho Lin would probably have turned up. He set out by himself again. He did not really think Ho Lin would be back and he had a great fear in his heart that the boy and Dabbitse



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might have been attacked by the tigers and wolves said to haunt the thick forest on the other side of the hill, although nobody in the neighbourhood had ever actually seen such animals.

Obstinate Ho wandered in all directions shouting for Ho Lin and Dabbitse. At last he was worn out and had to go back home to sit down. He wished that dawn would come and yet dreaded lest the new day should still bring no news of his son and Dabbitse.

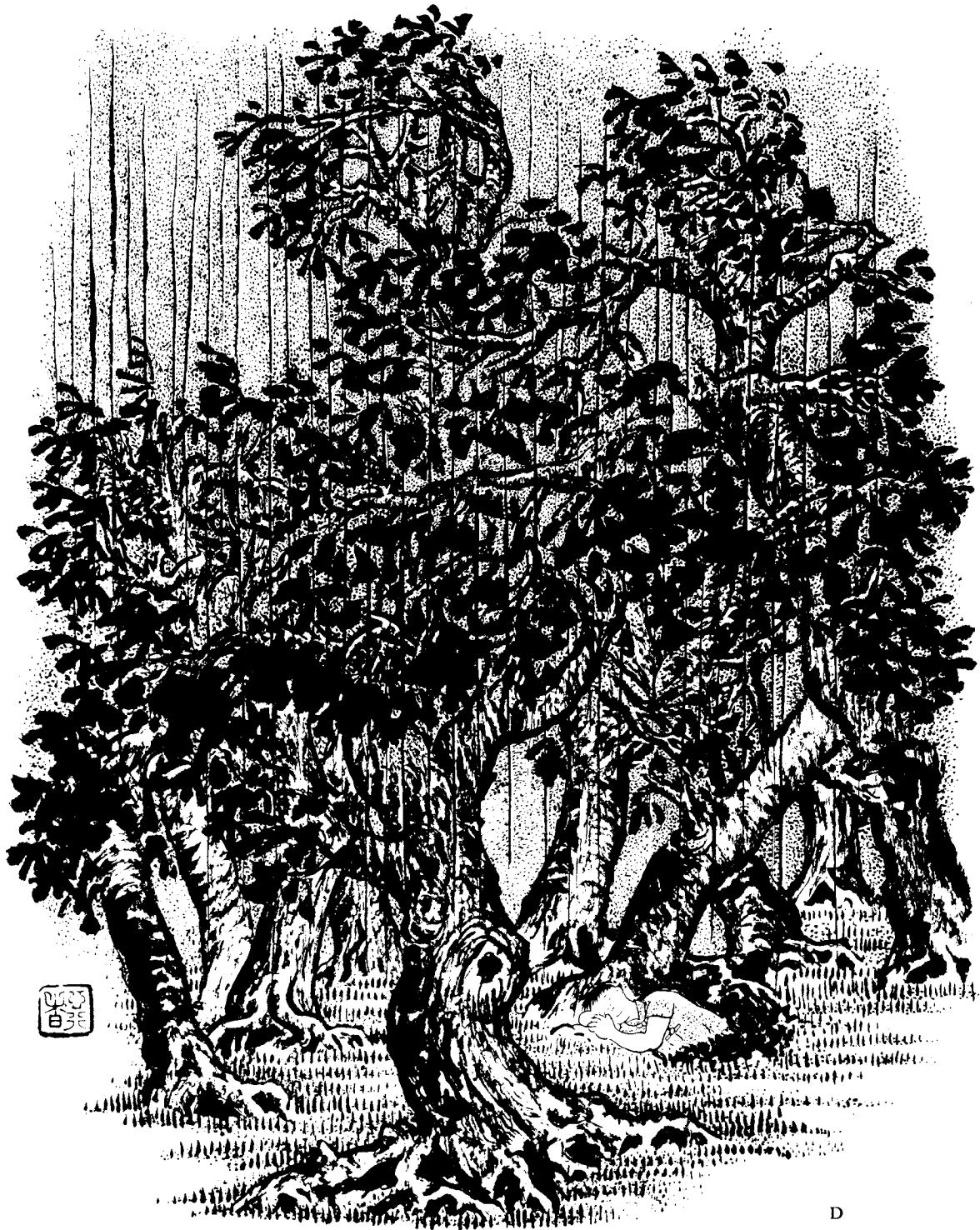
Just before dawn Ho Lin woke in his hollow. He was very surprised to find himself there because he did not remember either falling into it or falling asleep. He seemed to be quite dry again and then he saw that the rain had



stopped and that in any case he had been well sheltered in the hollow. He still felt tired. He could hear something moving near him and his fear took hold of him again. But happily dawn was breaking and soon it was bright enough for him to see the outline of the moving thing.

It was Dabbitse.

Forgetting all about his tiredness Ho Lin sprang out of the hollow and threw his arms round the buffalo's neck. Dabbitse too must have had a terrible night, but he could not talk about it. In his wanderings he must have sensed Ho Lin's footprints and have followed them. How happy they were to have found each other ! Ho Lin mounted Dabbitse's back. After they got out of the wood they both knew more or less which direction to take to reach home.

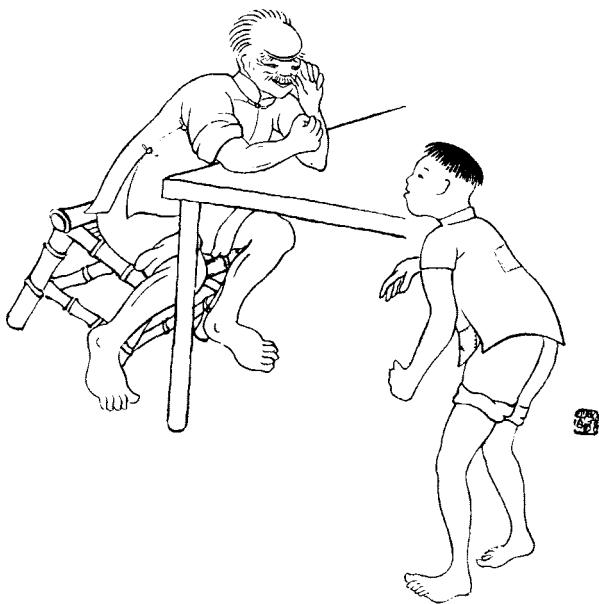


D

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When Ho Lin had put Dabbitse in the stable he went into the house and found his father with his head on his arms on the table, snoring. Ho Lin tried to make no noise, but he accidentally knocked over a stool and the old man awoke. When he saw Ho Lin he burst into tears of joy. He thought he must be dreaming.

Ho Lin was just beginning to tell his father what had happened when Apricot Blossom arrived, sent by her mother to see if Ho Lin was safe. She heard the whole story too. She felt sorry that she had not been at the grazing ground the previous day, for she knew that the boys would not have dared let off the fire-cracker if she had been there. Obstinate Ho did not want to hear any more about the matter. He told Apricot Blossom that Ho Lin was old enough to help in the field and would not be coming to the grazing ground much more.



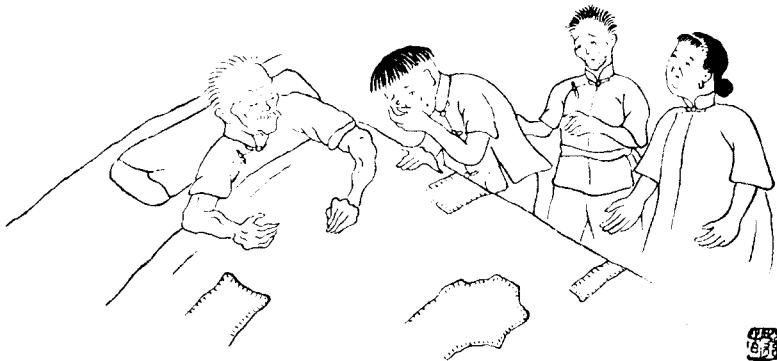
VIII

HO LIN was now between eight and nine. His father taught him how to weed, how to sort the young plants in the field, and how to gather the hay. Ho Lin was quick to learn and was soon very useful. He was glad not to be going to the grazing ground for the present. But life did not go very easily for him, for Obstinate Ho was now very frail and frequently ill. The old man realised

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that he could not live much longer, so he asked Apricot Blossom's father to send word to his young brother and ask him to come for a talk. Apricot Blossom's father had been giving Obstreinte Ho as much help as he could in his own spare time, though the old man protested that he could manage. Apricot Blossom's mother still did her best to look after Ho Lin's clothes and to give him a treat from time to time. Both the girl's parents knew that Ho Lin would soon be left alone.

When Timid Ho came in answer to the summons the aunt came too. She never allowed her husband to settle any important matter alone. Obstreinte Ho had been in bed for some days when they arrived, and his strength was failing rapidly. In a low voice he told his brother about the land and the house and



the small sum of money he had saved for Ho Lin. He begged his brother and sister-in-law to look after Ho Lin well, and reminded them that the boy was so far the only descendant to carry on the name of the Ho family and that the boy in his turn would look after them when they were old. At the same time Obstreinte Ho called Ho Lin close to his bed and urged him to pay the highest respect to his uncle and aunt, and to do all that they told him to do. This was according to Confucius' teaching that youngsters should respect their elders. Ho Lin sobbed bitterly, but he kept nodding his head to show that he would do all his father asked. There were tears running down the old man's face and he could say no more.

Timid Ho looked very sad and the tears streamed down his face too. Ho told his elder brother to rest himself and try to get well again and not to worry about these things. But Obstreinte Ho knew his end was near and he shook his head. Who would not be heartbroken at such a moment? Even the aunt seemed to be moved as she listened to the dying man's words. But she

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was annoyed to have it pointed out that Ho Lin was the only descendant to carry on the Ho name, for it reminded her that she herself had had no son. She assured Obstinate Ho that she would do her best for Ho Lin and would treat him as if he were her own son. Obstinate Ho expressed his thanks to her and seemed relieved. But in fact the woman was not sincere ; she had formed a plan which she hoped to work out to her own benefit.

Obstinate Ho then handed his brother the little money he had saved and also the deeds of his land and lay back exhausted with talking. A few hours later he died.

Apricot Blossom's father and mother came to the funeral and so did other neighbours. Most of them had never seen Timid Ho or his wife before ; they came to show their respect for Obstinate Ho, who had been a good farmer. Also they were all anxious to know what was going to happen to the rice field and the little house. After the funeral they were told that Timid Ho and his wife intended to take the boy and Dabbitse back with them to their home, and that they wanted to sell the field so that they would have enough money to look after the boy properly. This was the aunt's idea. Timid Ho knew that it would be going directly against his elder brother's wishes to sell the land, but he could never dare argue against his wife. She declared firmly that she would not be responsible for looking after the boy unless they got the extra money from selling the land. All the people present at the funeral knew that it could never have been their neighbour's wish to have the land sold, because they had heard Obstinate Ho say many a time that he was only working so hard so that the land would be in good order for his son. No one offered to buy it. After a while, Apricot Blossom's father could keep silent no longer. He pointed out that Ho Lin, although still very young, would certainly want a piece of land of his own when he grew up, and should make a good farmer like his father. In the end, when the aunt saw that they were all determined not to buy the field she had to agree to let it annually to Apricot Blossom's father.

Apricot Blossom's father did not really want more land, for he had already enough to look after. But he wanted to help Ho Lin and thought he could contrive to keep the land in order until the boy was old enough to manage it himself. As he rented the field he would have liked to buy Dabbitse to do the extra ploughing, but he knew how attached Ho Lin was to the buffalo. He felt that it would break the boy's heart if he had to go off with his uncle and aunt and leave Dabbitse behind. He knew that the best solution of all would have been for him to buy Dabbitse and to keep Ho Lin and to go on training him in the way the boy's father had begun to do. His wife also would have been pleased to have the boy in their home and would have cared for him as if he had been her own son. But this, Chinese custom forbade. In China it is not considered right for a child to live in another family as long as he has relations of his own to look after him. Public opinion decrees that one should

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do one's best to look after descendants of dead relations. Even the aunt recognised that she and Timid Ho must take the boy to live with them, though she protested loudly at the trouble to which she would be put. So Apricot Blossom's parents could not well suggest what they had in mind.

Ho Lin was miserable. He knew there was no alternative for him but to go and live with his uncle and aunt. He still remembered the smack his aunt had given him when he was a very small boy, and he felt afraid of her all the time. Apricot Blossom's mother was greatly concerned about him. When they went home after the funeral she and her husband talked about him for some time. Apricot Blossom listened eagerly. She asked her parents to bring Ho Lin to live with them, and they had to explain to her why this was not possible.

Next morning Apricot Blossom went to see Ho Lin. Fortunately the aunt was busy packing everything she thought was worth taking with her, and she had no time to bother about Ho Lin. Apricot Blossom told the boy that she had heard her parents say that the aunt was an ill-tempered woman, and she begged Ho Lin to be careful. She also told him how sorry she was that he was going away.

"I do not want to go and live with my aunt at all," replied Ho Lin tearfully, "but I cannot do anything else. I am glad that Dabbitse will still be with me."

Apricot Blossom comforted him as best she could, until the aunt shouted for Ho Lin and Apricot Blossom had to say good-bye to him hurriedly.

IX

To get to Timid Ho's home on the other side of the Yangtse River it was necessary to go through the town. This gave Ho Lin his first glimpse of a town. Until now the word "town" had meant nothing to him. He was amazed to see so many houses built close together and so many people hurrying along the roads and streets. He did not know the names of such objects as sedan-chairs, rickshaws, motor cars. He was still very young and like most youngsters wanted to find out about everything that was new to him. He would have stood to gaze at each of these novelties one at a time if he had been accompanied by his old father, and would have poured out all sorts of questions even if Obstinate Ho could not have answered any of them. Alas ! the old man was not with him this time, but instead his stern-faced aunt and timid uncle. However, it was impossible to stand at the street corners even if his aunt had had the patience to let him do so, because Dabbitse's bulky body would have caused a traffic jam. Indeed, Dabbitse was so startled to see and hear all these new things that it was quite hard work to keep him moving, and the uncle and aunt's one idea was to get out of the town as quickly as possible.

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On Ho Lin had to go, still wondering which of all the strange objects produced the lovely hooting sound.

When they reached the riverside there were again many new things for Ho Lin to see—steamboats, fishing boats, sampans, junks, flat ferry boats, and all kinds of people. Ho Lin knew ponds, mountain springs and winding streams, but not a big river like the Yangtse, which is so wide that one cannot see across it. It is also very long, flowing down from the highest mountains, some of them more than 9,000 ft. high, of Szechuan Province in West China to Shanghai near the sea, more than a thousand miles. Because its course is so long and because its waters carry sand and dust, its colour is a milky yellow. Ho Lin, however, did not worry about the colour; he gazed at the many white sails on the surface, and particularly at one small steamboat which moved so quickly that it seemed to fly past all the other boats. He had time to gaze here because his uncle was having difficulty in persuading the ferry boatman to take the buffalo across the river. When the man heard that the buffalo was only newly grown up he was afraid that Dabbitse might suddenly want to plunge into the water himself. The matter was eventually settled and a sack was wrapped round Dabbitse's head to prevent his seeing the water while crossing the river. Dabbitse's heavy body brought the edge of the boat down level with the water while the boatman rowed steadily on. Ho Lin noticed that the surface of the Yangtse was not so flat and even as that of the lotus flower pond. There were always some wrinkles and waves on this river, even if there was no wind at all. The gentle rocking of the boat gave Ho Lin a strange thrilling feeling. When they reached mid-stream he stood up, looking in all directions, and seeing nothing but the great expanse of water and a few flying birds. The boat now rocked heavily and Ho Lin found it difficult to stand firmly, and was soon told to sit down by his aunt. This increased movement was caused by a small steamboat passing a short distance away. Owing to the big flat bottom of the ferryboat and the solid weight of Dabbitse it did not rock so badly as it might have. It took more than two hours to cross to the other side of the Yangtse where Ho Lin's new home lay.

X

THIS new home did not seem to Ho Lin any bigger than his own home. In fact, his uncle and aunt were no richer than his old father. The land where the home stood had formerly been part of the river bed. For hundreds of years the sand and dust which the river brings from its upper reaches have piled up, gradually forming a sort of soil. The Yangtse valley has the most fertile of all soils for rice, and it is therefore the most crowded and populated area, every

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bit of land being cultivated. Though this newly formed "land" is subject to the floods of the river, it is soon cultivated. Timid Ho could afford to buy a very small piece of the river bank, because it did not cost so much as a field on the mainland. For a great many years he had worked hard on it and it brought him and his wife enough crops to eat and to sell. Of course, he contributed with other farmers in the neighbourhood to the building of the dyke along the river verge. It was very flat, with few woods. Ho Lin's new home was not strongly built, though it looked the same as the common type of Chinese peasant's hut. It had two little bedrooms, a hall and a kitchen. Ho Lin thought that they were all much smaller than the rooms in his own home, but perhaps this was only the result of his filial feeling!

The ill-nature of Timid Ho's wife soon showed itself beyond a doubt. She should have let Ho Lin occupy the second little bedroom—the sole preparation she made for him was to set up in a corner of the hall a broken chair, which he was ordered to tidy away in the early morning. For the first night Ho Lin was too sleepy to mind, but he soon found it an uncomfortable bed. During the following days his aunt found fault with him incessantly. She made him get up much earlier than herself and her husband. If Ho Lin seemed sleepy he was sure to receive a slap on his face. She gave him all sorts of jobs to do without explaining to him how to do them. As they were not easy ones he naturally made mistakes and then she scolded him soundly or even beat him. Ho Lin was very unhappy and could not hide his misery. This seemed to annoy his aunt more than anything.

One day, to the boy's great distress, he discovered that Dabbitse had been sold to a man in the next village, who was to come and fetch him at any moment. Although the aunt had from the beginning had it in mind to sell Dabbitse for a good price, she would never have consented to sell him to Apricot Blossom's father because he would not have paid what she asked. Now she had driven a good bargain. Ho Lin never left Dabbitse's side after he heard the news. When the man came Ho Lin clung to one of the buffalo's legs, sobbing bitterly, just as he had clung to his father's legs years before. But Dabbitse did not show any sympathy for him. The buffalo did not know his own fate. The man seemed very impatient, and Ho Lin's aunt soon put an end to the scene by snatching the boy away roughly, cuffing him soundly and shouting at him all the time. Ho Lin kicked and fought, but she held on to him until the man had taken Dabbitse away.

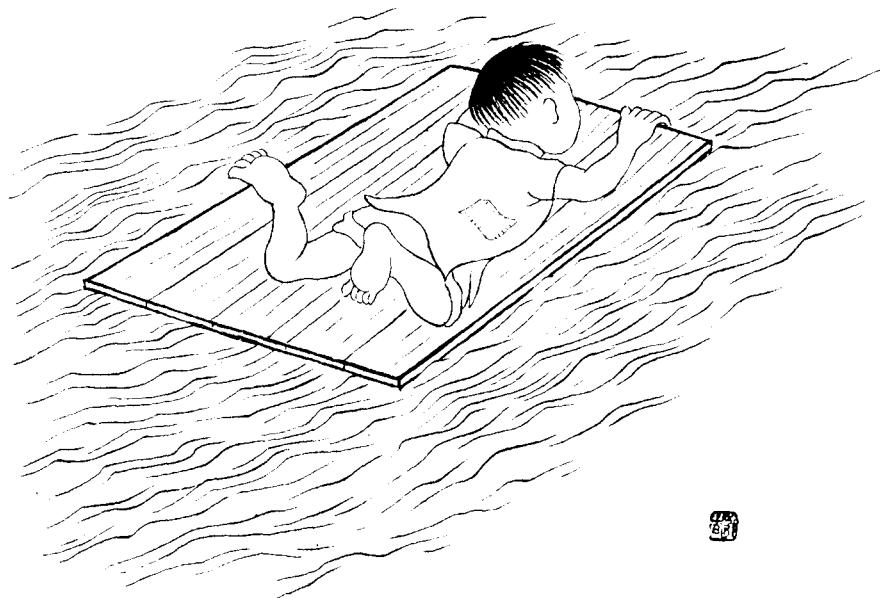
From then onwards there were tears in Ho Lin's eyes all the time, and his aunt became sharper and sharper. His uncle should not have allowed this treatment, but he continued to be a coward where his wife was concerned. One night the aunt declared that Ho Lin was absolutely useless to them, always moping about, and that they could not afford to waste good food on him any longer. Timid Ho hesitated to agree to this, for he was afraid that

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public opinion might consider him wicked to send his nephew away heartlessly. At the same time he secretly thought the boy would be happier away from his aunt. So he agreed and suggested that they should arrange to hire the boy to the man who had bought Dabbitse. He had already heard that the man wanted a boy to look after the buffalo. This arrangement was soon made. Ho Lin was to eat and sleep at the man's house in return for looking after the buffalo and doing whatever other jobs he could do.

Of course, Ho Lin was delighted to be with Dabbitse again. But his new master proved to be very poor and constantly expected the boy to do more than he could. Sometimes Ho Lin had to bring a big bucket of hot water to wash the farmer's muddy feet when he came back from the field, and he had to help him in the field too.

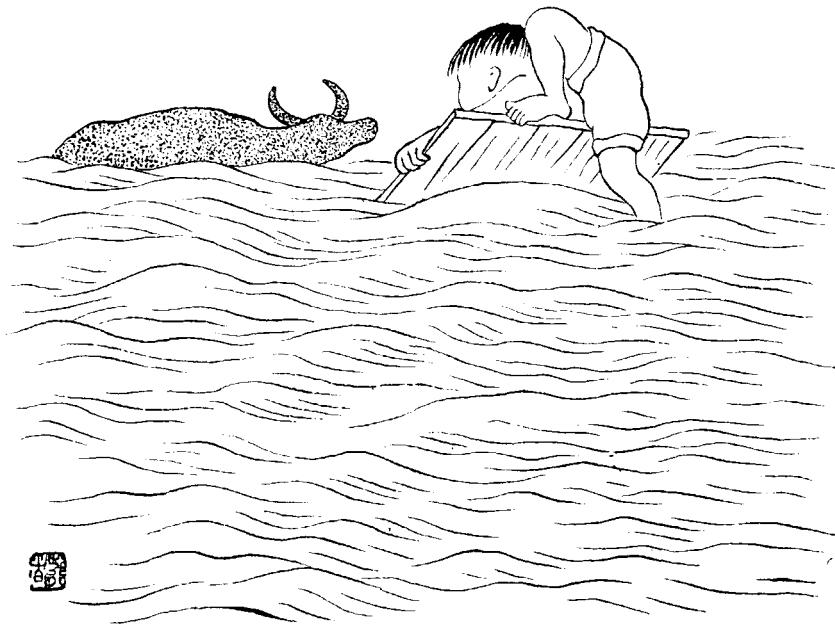
There was no room for Ho Lin to sleep in the house, and the man built him a shelter beside the buffalo's stable and gave him a couple of planks and some hay for a bed, and a torn cotton-patched bed-cover to cover him. This was quite comfortable while the warm weather lasted, but in the cold weather, especially when the wind blew hard, Ho Lin could not sleep for long without being awakened by the icy cold. But he did not complain, for he dreaded more than anything being sent back to his aunt.



XI

THERE was much rain that year. The Yangtse was unusually full of water and was still rising. The farmers could talk of nothing else. Ho Lin, not realising that there was any danger, took pleasure in gazing at the wide expanse of water. It was a relief to him that his master was so busy discussing the daily rising water with other farmers that he had no time to think of jobs for Ho Lin.

As some protection to the flat, low land against the great danger of floods, an earthen dyke had been built along the river bank, and for a good many years no grave flood had occurred. Now that the river looked so threatening,

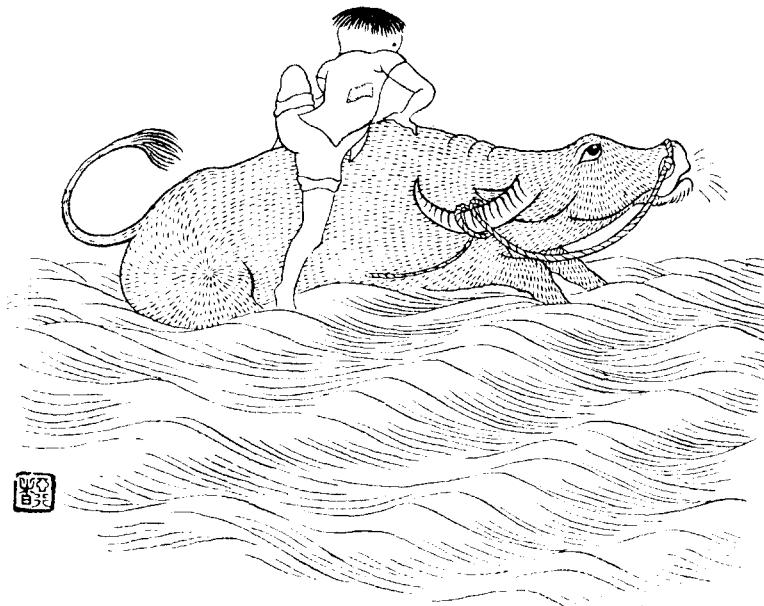


the villagers paid more attention to the dyke than for many years past. They still had confidence in it.

One night a violent wind arose and great volumes of water were dashed incessantly against the dyke. Suddenly the dyke gave way, the waters poured through, and were quickly spreading mercilessly over the fields. Villagers who had been on the watch, afraid that this might happen, rushed to the gap to make desperate efforts to repair it or to stop it with their bodies. They were swept away. The rushing water uprooted trees and destroyed houses. On all sides rose cries for help, horrible to hear. Nobody could help; all were in the same plight. By degrees the cries died away.

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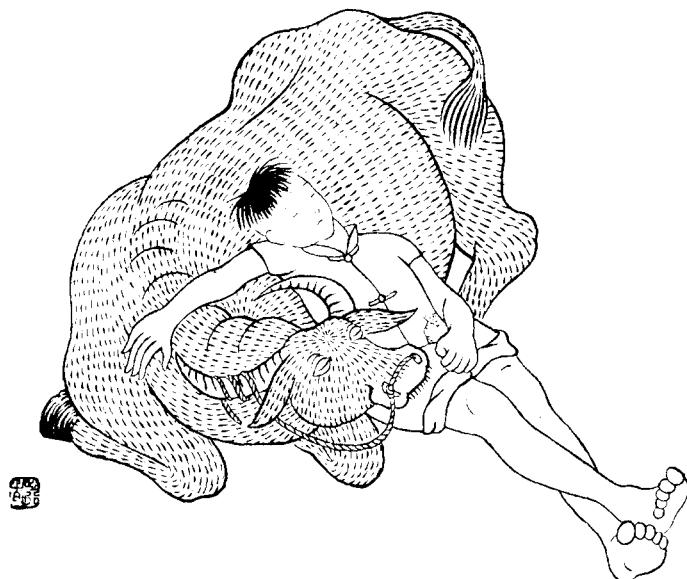
Fortunately there was no big tree near the stable and the shelter where Dabbitse and Ho Lin were. The shelter was smashed at once, but it was only built of light wood which did not hurt Ho Lin's body. He felt himself being borne along on one of the planks of his bed. He held on to it as tightly as he could. Presently the plank drifted against something in the darkness. He thought at first that it might be a fallen tree or the roof of a house. But no, he heard heavy breathing. Could it be Dabbitse? Yes, it was, swimming bravely in the flood. Ho Lin could see him faintly, and at once tried to climb on his back. He was nearly swept away twice, but in the end he managed it. Dabbitse swam on. Although he was so fond of water he could not keep on swimming for ever, especially in the tearing flood water. Soon he was panting and sweating. Presently the water buffeted them against the trunk of a tree and they had a minute's rest. Then they were pulled on again. At last they were flung out at the edge of the flood and managed to scramble on to higher ground and safety. There they both lay exhausted. Dabbitse had never made such an effort before. Ho Lin lay very close to him with his arms across the animal's body and his head resting on them. Though half dazed with cold and exhaustion Ho Lin realised that Dabbitse had saved his life and he pressed tightly against his friend.



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Here they were found in the morning sunshine by one of the many rescue parties going about in boats in search of survivors. Ho Lin was hardly conscious, but Dabbitse did not seem much the worse for his effort. They were taken to one of the communal feeding camps set up for refugees, where they were well looked after.

Not many people in the neighbourhood were saved. When the waters subsided and the emergency was over, the authorities began to seek the relatives of the surviving children. Ho Lin told them of his uncle and aunt, but it was



found that they had both been drowned. Then the boy mentioned Apricot Blossom's father, who, he explained, was looking after his own dead father's field. The authorities thought this was the man with whom to get in touch. After some days Apricot Blossom's father was informed of Ho Lin's plight and at once he offered to take the boy and Dabbitse and look after them. His wife could not stop the tears rolling down her face when she saw Ho Lin again, partly because of her great joy at being able to do something for the boy at last and partly because she imagined so vividly the dreadful experience the boy had passed through. Apricot Blossom was overjoyed to see Ho Lin again. Ho Lin himself was more than glad to be with these friendly people after all his bitter experiences.

XII

FROM now on the rent which Apricot Blossom's father had been paying to Ho Lin's uncle was due to the boy. It was used to cover the expenses of feeding and clothing him ; the surplus was put aside for him until he should be older. They thought it right to send the boy to the village school for three years ; and indeed it was now a government order that every boy and girl should learn to read and write. The old couple had already found Apricot Blossom more useful after she had been to school for a short time, and they wanted to give Ho Lin an equal chance. At the same time Apricot Blossom's father taught the boy as much as possible about field work. Out of school hours Ho Lin and Dabbitse were often to be seen working in the field with Apricot Blossom's father.

At first Ho Lin did not prove to be bright at school. He had great difficulty in remembering what he was taught, especially the many different words, each on its square of paper, which had to be learnt by heart. The teacher thought that the boy must have suffered severe shock in that terrible experience of the flood, so he excused him and was more lenient towards him than with the other pupils. However, Ho Lin was a boy who did not want to lag behind, so he worked with great determination and by degrees began to remember these troublesome words. Some of the other boys who learnt very quickly also forgot very quickly, but once Ho Lin had grasped something he remembered it for ever. At the end of his three years at school he knew how to read and to write, and was able to deal with everyday written matters.

Apricot Blossom's father also had his difficulties during this time. Dabbitse would not settle to work when Ho Lin was not there. He seemed restless and uneasy as if he thought that his young master might have got into some new danger and might need him. Who can tell the thoughts of a dumb animal ? As soon as Ho Lin was sighted returning home Dabbitse began to work properly. Ho Lin would then take the man's place and Dabbitse would work as keenly as if he were trying to make up for the time he had wasted. Finally Apricot Blossom's father decided always to use his own buffalo during school hours and to leave Dabbitse in the stable until Ho Lin came home.

Time passed quickly. Obstinate Ho had been dead for more than five years and Ho Lin had become a good-looking and well-built young fellow of fifteen. Life had gone smoothly for him since he had been living with Apricot Blossom's family.

Now that he had finished with school he was not only able to look after the field which had belonged to his father, but had time still to help Apricot Blossom's father with his field too. Several times Apricot Blossom's father suggested that perhaps Ho Lin should now go back and live in his old father's home and be quite independent, but his wife always found some superficially

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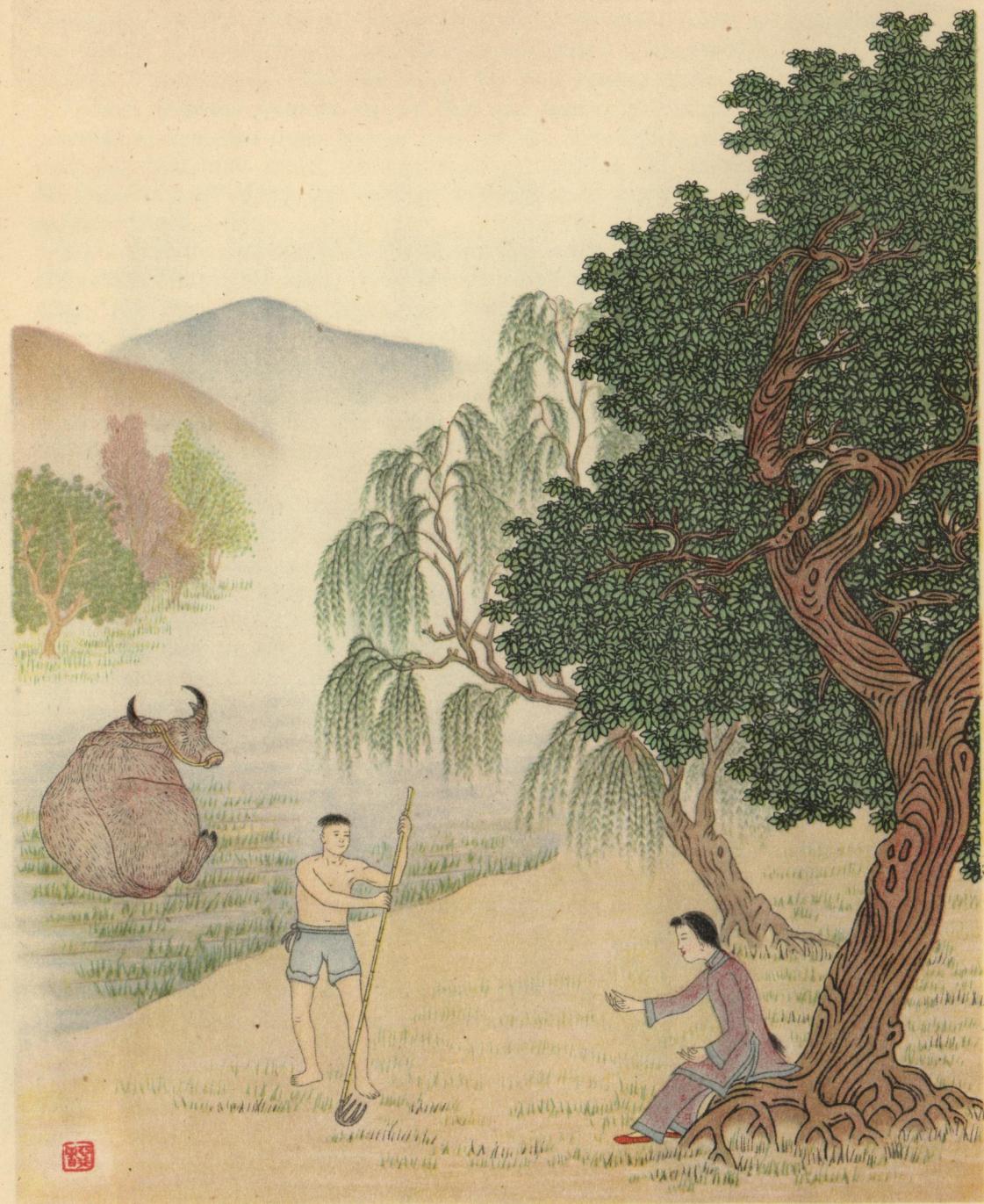
reasonable objection. Her affection for the boy had grown very deep ; also she could not fail to notice how her daughter felt about him, though Apricot Blossom always behaved most correctly in accordance with the teachings of Confucius. Chinese girls and boys need to be taught that from the age of about twelve they should not show their feelings in public and should not expect to talk, play and laugh together as they had done as small children. Girls especially had to learn to behave with dignity. This may seem strange in these days, but Apricot Blossom's mother had been brought up herself in the old way and she would have thought she was neglecting her duty if she had not impressed the same rules of behaviour on her daughter. Apricot Blossom now spent most of her time under her mother's eye, for she was learning to help in the house ; she had little opportunity of seeing Ho Lin except at the evening meal, when their elders were present and the two young people scarcely spoke at all. But Apricot Blossom knew that she felt unspeakably happy when she was with Ho Lin, and sometimes she could not help wondering to herself whether he had the same feeling about her.

Ho Lin's thoughts were chiefly occupied with the heavy field work. He did not actively realise that his relationship with Apricot Blossom had changed since the days when they had played on the grazing ground together. He had always been the quieter of the two, and now that he had shouldered the responsibility of a grown-up, and taken full charge of his father's field, he too, without having received much instruction in Confucian behaviour for young people, behaved with dignity. Only sometimes when he went to bed at night, tired from the day's work, he wondered why he should feel so wakeful.



It was a very hot summer afternoon. The shrill incessant song of the cicadas in the tree-tops bore witness to the oppressive heat. No wonder that Ho Lin was sweating all over. The upper part of his body was naked, its sunburnt surface, covering his powerful muscles, glistened. At the moment he was standing by the shallow stream watching Dabbitse dozing lazily in the mud. He would like to have plunged in for a swim himself, but there was not enough water. Suddenly he heard his name called and looking round he saw Apricot Blossom some distance further along the stream. She had been washing clothes and was sitting in the shade of a big camphor tree to cool.

"Lin, don't stand so still in the scorching sun," she said ; "come and sit for a while in this lovely shade." The young man moved slowly towards the tree and with some hesitation sat down on another of the rugged roots of the tree a little way from Apricot Blossom. Neither of them spoke and their silence seemed to intensify the heat around them. Ho Lin suddenly felt much



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hotter than when he had been standing in the blazing sun, and Apricot Blossom knew that a warm blush was spreading over her cheeks. Ah, both their tender hearts were aflame at that moment. Perhaps it was their first strange feeling about life. Apricot Blossom, in spite of her embarrassment, could not keep quiet very long. "Why have you not talked to me lately?" she asked.

There was no reply. The silence and the heat became more intense.

Apricot Blossom went on to say that she wished they could talk and play together as they had done before. To this Ho Lin replied with a serious air that they had both grown up and must not behave like children any more. He found himself adding that Apricot Blossom really knew she should not have suggested such a thing.

These were the first hurtful words he had ever spoken to her. Apricot Blossom immediately burst into tears. Poor Ho Lin—he felt helpless and awkward. And when, just then, Dabbitse began to flounder up out of the mud, he seized his chance and said in a matter-of-fact voice that he and Dabbitse must go back to the field and do some more work. Then just as he was about to move away beside the buffalo, on an uncontrollable impulse he turned back, bent over Apricot Blossom, who was still sitting with bowed head, and whispered quickly, "I wish we could be together always." He was gone almost before she could look up.

Only the girl's mother noticed Apricot Blossom's swollen red eyelids. Apricot Blossom could not keep to herself what had happened beside the stream, but soon she was confiding it all to her mother. The old woman was overjoyed to know that Ho Lin, whom she loved deeply, was as fond of Apricot Blossom as she had long known Apricot Blossom to be of him. They must become officially engaged without delay. The girl's father agreed gladly, and all the neighbours who had known Obstinate Ho thought what a suitable arrangement it was.

Now Ho Lin and Apricot Blossom were happy in the knowledge that they belonged to each other and would be together always. This had to suffice for the present, for it is an old Chinese custom that an engaged couple should not see much of each other before their wedding; possibly the elders have feared that too much time would be devoted to love-making and duties would be neglected. So Ho Lin moved back to his old home and Dabbitse found himself in his old stable again, a source of great joy to him.

Until they were both fully grown up it was only on festival days that Apricot Blossom and Ho Lin met. Then an elaborate country wedding was arranged. Apricot Blossom was carried to Ho Lin's home in a flowery embroidered sedan-chair and the ceremony was performed there.

Ho Lin was now an experienced young farmer and could help Apricot Blossom's father a lot, for his father-in-law was getting on in years. After a year of marriage a baby son was born to Ho Lin and Apricot Blossom. The old

D A B B I T S E

couple, especially the mother, were delighted to have a grandson. They were content to know that both family names would continue to flourish. Sometimes in the evenings when Ho Lin and Apricot Blossom were talking, Ho Lin would remark how happily his life had turned out after all, and he never failed to add, "How truly my father spoke when he said Dabbitse would be my good and faithful friend."

T H E E N D



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Chiang Yee

Chiang Yee (simplified Chinese: 蒋彝; traditional Chinese: 蔣彝; pinyin: *Jiāng Yí*; Wade–Giles: *Chiang I*; 19 May 1903 – 26 October 1977), self-styled as "The Silent Traveller" (哑行者), was a Chinese poet, author, painter and calligrapher. The success of *The Silent Traveller in London* (1938) was followed by a series of books in the same vein, all of which he illustrated himself. Mr. Chiang is most famously remembered in China for his translation of "Coca Cola" to 可口可樂, pronounced KǒKǒu KǎLè, meaning "delicious delight".

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1903–1933: China

Chiang Yee was born in Jiujiang, China, on a day variously recorded as 19 May or 14 June. He married Tseng Yun in 1924, with whom he was to have four children, and in 1925 graduated from Nanjing University (then named National Southeastern University), not only one of the world's oldest institutions of learning but also relaunched in 1920 as one of China's earlier modern universities. He served for over a year in the Chinese army during the Second Sino-Japanese War, then taught chemistry in middle schools, lectured at National Chengchi University, and worked as assistant editor of a Hangzhou newspaper. He subsequently served as magistrate of three counties (Jiujang in Jiangxi, and Dangtu and Wuhu in Anhui). Unhappy with the situation in China then (see Nanjing decade), he departed for England in 1933, to study for an MSc in Economics at the London School of Economics, focusing on municipal administration, leaving wife and family behind.

1933–1955: England

From 1935 to 1938 he taught Chinese at the School of Oriental Studies (now School of Oriental and African Studies), University of London, and 1938 to 1940 worked at the Wellcome Museum of Anatomy and Pathology. During this period, he wrote and illustrated a well-received series of books entitled *The Silent Traveller* in..... His first was *The Silent Traveller: a Chinese Artist in Lakeland*, written from a journal of a fortnight in the English Lake District in August 1936). Others followed: *The Silent Traveller in London*, the Yorkshire Dales, and Oxford. Despite paper shortages and rationing, these books were kept in print. He wrote *The Silent Traveller in Wartime*, and, after World War II ended, the series gradually ventured further afield, to Edinburgh, Dublin, Paris, New York, San Francisco, and Boston, concluding in 1972 with Japan. He lived for a time with fellow expatriates Hsiung Shih-I, author of a West End hit,^[1] and Dymia Hsiung, the first Chinese woman to write a fictionalised autobiography in English.

Commentary on his writing: 1933–1955

The books characteristically bring a fresh 'sideways look' in a peaceful and non-judgemental way to places perhaps unfamiliar at the time to a Chinese national: the author was struck by things the locals might not notice, such as beards, or the fact that the so-called Lion's Haunch on Arthur's Seat in Edinburgh is actually far more like a sleeping elephant. In his wartime books, Chiang Yee made it plain that he was fervently opposed to Nazism. His writings exude a feeling of positive curiosity, life-enhancing in a unique way. Some of his books have been re-issued in recent decades, at times with fresh introductions.

1955–1975: United States

After living for some years in a small flat in London and being obliged, during the war, neither to travel nor to take part in the hostilities, on account of being classed as an 'alien', he moved to the United States in 1955, where he became a lecturer (and ultimately Emeritus Professor of Chinese) at Columbia University from 1955 to 1957, with an interlude in 1958 and 1959 during which he was Emerson Fellow in Poetry at Harvard University. He became a naturalized citizen in 1966. He illustrated all his books, including several for children, and he wrote a standard tome on Chinese calligraphy.

1975–1977: China

Chiang died in his seventies in China after spending over forty years away from his homeland, on a day variously recorded as 7 or 26 October 1977. His tomb is on the slopes of Mount Lu above his home town; he is now part of the landscape and environment that influenced his painting over the years.

Survivors

Chiang Yee was survived by his eldest son, Chiang Chien-kuo who joined him in the UK after World War II. Chien-Kuo married and lived in Jersey, Channel Islands. He died in 2002 and was survived by his wife, Barbara Chiang, two children, Stephen and Sudi Chiang and grandchildren, Toby and Emily Chiang and Shiao-li Green. Chiang Yee's younger son, Chiang Chien-Fei, joined him in the United States in the 1960s, where he worked as an artist until his death in 2011 in Old Saybrook, Connecticut. He is survived by his wife, Chiaowen Chiang; two children, Hsinyee (San-San) and Hsinya (Ton-Ton); and grandchildren Adam, Jeremy, Jolie, and Cooper.

Commemoration

In June 2019, 40 years after Chiang's death, a blue plaque was unveiled at 28 Southmoor Road, Oxford where he rented two rooms from 1940 to 1955. The plaque honours his contribution to British and Chinese life.^[2] He is thought to be only the third Chinese person to receive a blue plaque, i.e. a memorial created by English Heritage. (Writer Lao She has a blue plaque in Notting Hill and Sun Yat-sen, the first president of the Republic of China, is commemorated in the village of Cottered in Hertfordshire).^[2]

Chiang Yee's works

The Silent Traveller series

- *The Silent Traveller: A Chinese Artist in Lakeland* (London: Country Life, 1937 reprinted Mercat, 2004). ISBN 1-84183-067-4.
- *The Silent Traveller in London* (London: Country Life, 1938 reprinted Signal, 2001), six impressions by 1945.
- *The Silent Traveller in War Time* (London: Country Life, 1939).
- *The Silent Traveller in the Yorkshire Dales* (London: Methuen 1941), three editions by 1942. Not known if reprinted.
- *The Silent Traveller in Oxford* (London: Methuen, 1944, reprinted Signal, 2003), four editions by 1948.
- *The Silent Traveller in Edinburgh* (London: Methuen, 1948, reprinted Mercat, 2003). ISBN 1-84183-048-8.
- *The Silent Traveller in New York* (London: Methuen, 1950).
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China: childhood and return

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Painting and calligraphy

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- *Chinese Calligraphy* (London: Methuen, 1955).
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Illustrated only

- Innes Herdan (tr.), *300 Tang Poems* (Far East Book Co., 2000), illustrated by Chiang Yee. ISBN 957-612-471-9,
- *Birds and Beasts*, Chiang Yee (Country Life, 1939), a portfolio of illustrations of birds and animals.
- *The Pool of Chien Lung*; by Lady Hosie, 1944 (frontispiece).
- *Chinese Cookery*; by M. P. Lee – decorations (i.e., illustrations) by Chiang Yee.

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An exhibition of original paintings and drawings by Chiang Yee - *The silent traveller: Chiang Yee in Britain 1933-55* - was displayed at the Victoria and Albert Museum, 23 April to 9 Nov 2012.^[3]

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External links

- Introduction to *300 T'ANG POEMS* (<https://web.archive.org/web/20061018190659/http://www.chinapage.com/poem/300poem/introduction.html>)
- Gallery of Chiang Yee's paintings of the English Lake District (<http://www.cleo.net.uk/resource/cy>)
- [1] (<http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/journals/research-journal/issue-no.-4-summer-2012/the-silent-traveller-chiang-yee-in-britain-1933-55>)
- Oxfordshire Blue Plaques: Chiang Yee (<http://oxonblueplaques.org.uk/plaques/chiang.html>)

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